

150 Ways to Recruit New Members & Retain Current Ones

Following is a list of ideas on how to recruit new members, grouped into major categories, while at the same time involving your current members. Having them involved with recruitment simultaneously helps with member retention. An interested, involved member helping recruit new members is far more likely to continue his or her current NARFE and chapter membership.

Chapters and federations should always be looking for ways to grow and to recruit new members and there are many simple things we can do. Many of these ideas could also be used by National Only members as they recruit for NARFE. Remember that both chapter members and National Only members are all North Carolina Federation and NARFE members.

The following ideas have come from personal experience, from other federation members, and from the internet, where suggestions for recruiting civic club members have been adapted into suggestions for recruiting NARFE chapter and national only members. We guarantee that you will hear multiple recruiting and retention ideas that you've never thought of. We've just got to start using them.

Many of the original ideas and suggestions are courtesy of the Wild Apricot Blog at www.wildapricot.com.

The first category of ideas and suggestions is titled:

Get Help from Your Current Chapter Members

(There are 18 suggestions in this category)

01. **Host a “bring a friend” chapter meeting**
Encourage members to bring someone eligible for NARFE membership. This could even be a recurring event so that members are continually bringing new friends!
02. **Create a welcome packet for guests who are recruitment prospects**
Include things like NARFE pamphlets, a chapter calendar, and contact information, as well as information about becoming a NARFE and chapter member.
03. **Develop clear chapter goals and a strategic plan for recruitment**
Be sure and involve your chapter members in the process

04. **Follow up with guests after the meeting**
Send an email or postcard, or make a phone call thanking the guest for attending, and asking if they're considering membership. Sending out a post-event survey can also help you see what went well and what you can improve for next time.
05. **Reach out to former members**
Some people might be ready to come back after a break from chapter membership.
06. **Encourage members to share your newsletter with friends,**
Especially if they're featured in it!
07. **Invite members' families to events**
Remember that spouses of current and retired federal employees and survivor annuitants are all potential members
08. **Help members develop their own "elevator speech" about their NARFE and chapter membership**
Why are they members? What's the biggest benefit of membership? Can they explain the purpose of the chapter or of NARFE?
09. **Ask your members for recruitment ideas**
They may have an idea you haven't thought of before, or know about recruitment opportunities within their own social networks.
10. **Offer chapter business cards to your members**
It's an easy way for them to point people to your chapter and share information more easily with their network.
11. **Offer a different meeting time to attract people with different schedules**
Is your meeting time leaving out a whole group of people? Consider switching up your meeting day and time to attract more people. If this works, and you change anything permanently, don't forget to inform NARFE Headquarters.
12. **Coach members on creating a welcoming meeting experience**
Getting potential new members to attend meetings is only half the

battle! Remind current members to greet newcomers and try to avoid NARFE or chapter jargon when there are visitors present.

13. **Create an invitation email template your members can use**
Make it easy for members to send invitations to join the chapter and NARFE by doing most of the work for them. You could also create paper-based pamphlets or member application forms, or boiler-plate text that current members can copy-and-paste into emails or Facebook messages that they send to colleagues.
14. **Create a chapter or NARFE button, pin, or name tag and encourage members to wear it at meetings and elsewhere**
Make sure it's stylish so members will be more likely to wear it, and people will ask what it's about.
15. **Conduct exit interviews with departing members**
When you know why people are leaving, you can start figuring out ways to keep them.
16. **Create perks for chapter members who recruit new members**
Little perks and freebies can really motivate people. Think about gift certificates or a shout-out at your next meeting for members who bring in new prospects.
17. **Consider creating a promotional video or use a federation produced one**
Members can share it with their contacts, and you can share it on social media.
18. **Thank your member recruiters regularly**
Here are a few different ways you can do that:
 - Offer especially engaged members a "recruitment role" in the chapter, such as chapter membership chair or "assistant chair."
 - Send your recruiters to area or federation membership meetings at chapter expense.
 - Hold special recruitment meetings to give these members the necessary tools and opportunity, and encourage them to recruit new members.
 - Give them a few minutes in every meeting to announce their results and to ask for help.

The second category of ideas and suggestions is titled:

Interact With Your Community

(There are 23 suggestions in this category)

01. **Volunteer as a group to participate in a community event**
You'll get to do good as well as meet possible members in your area.
02. **Have a booth at malls, fairs, festivals, or similar events**
Give volunteers talking points to introduce your chapter to the community.
03. **Advertise in local newspapers & cable TV if you can afford to**
04. **Send letters or make personal contact with local federal agency heads**
Invite these leaders to chapter meetings as speakers.
05. **Do service projects that serve a need in the community**
06. **Place pamphlets in places that federal employees or retirees may be**
07. **Send letters to people in the news with an invitation to visit the chapter, possibly as a speaker**
Publicize the event widely and if the speaker agrees, invite the public.
08. **Host a community Open House for prospective members**
09. **Leave extra copies of NARFE magazines in waiting rooms**
10. **Honor outstanding community members with awards**
Have them presented at a chapter meeting and invite the public.
11. **Put posters about NARFE and the local chapter in public areas**
Be sure to place them near federal installations.
12. **Sponsor a local event.**
Include your chapter name and logo on promotional materials, and make sure event organizers have your chapter information for anyone who asks.

13. **Give a talk about your chapter at other organizations.**
Share your mission and activities with other civically-minded people.
14. **Host activities for members and non-members alike**
A group activity is an excellent way to meet new people. Something like a park clean-up or other community service projects can attract a wide range of prospective members.
15. **Walk in a parade or build a float for town parades**
You'll put your chapter in front of the whole town — and look good doing it!
16. **Host seasonal meet-and-greets with a fun activity**
Think about a fall hayride, a winter hot cocoa party, a spring nature walk, or a summer ice cream social to attract new members.
17. **Have a meeting in a public location like a park or square**
It draws attention and is a low-commitment way for curious potential members to check you out.
18. **Host a guest speaker**
Guest speakers attract non-members who share your interests. many chapters bring in new speakers on a monthly basis to keep attracting new audiences.
19. **Host a charitable event like a run or walk**
You'll raise money for a good cause, and introduce your chapter to new people who also support the cause.
20. **Host low commitment meet and greets at a local coffee shop**
Invite prospects to come for a coffee on you, simply to learn about your chapter and meet your members.
21. **Film member stories and testimonials**
Publish them to your website and social media so you can give prospective members a visual reminder of just how engaged your current members are.

22. **Personally follow up with every prospect**
When somebody signs up for one of our events, either at that event or afterwards, follow up with each one of them personally and ask them if they want to join. Probably about 95% will want to join after that.
23. **Launch a direct mail campaign**
If you can put together a prospects mailing list, or if you reach out to lapsed members, you might see success!

The third category of ideas and suggestions is titled:

Traditional Marketing and Recruitment Ideas

(There are 11 suggestions in this category)

01. **Put up recruitment flyers around town**
Look for community bulletin boards and high traffic spots like grocery stores and coffee shops.
02. **Place chapter materials at willing businesses**
03. **Think about where people who share your interests will be**
Leave material with federal installations for sure.
04. **Share chapter information with new residents**
Do local realtors give welcome baskets when someone moves to town?
Ask to include your chapter information with baskets any new to town
federal employees will receive.
05. **Announce chapter meetings in local newsletters**
Look for neighborhood and special interest newsletters, whether online or on paper.
06. **Put all meetings on community calendars**
Usually you can submit your information quickly online, and get listed quickly.

07. **Submit your chapter information to local directories**
Your chamber of commerce, local newspaper, or other local groups may publish a directory — list your organization and chapter!
08. **Place an advertisement in the local paper**
Paid advertising can pay off if you select publications that potential members will read.
09. **Put a PSA on the radio**
Let the community know about your chapter or its events in a short radio message.
10. **Create an informational brochure about your chapter**
Include the chapter's mission and activities, as well as contact information.
11. **Send media releases to local outlets when your chapter completes a project**
Learn to write a press release so you can attract media attention to your chapter.

The fourth category of ideas and suggestions is titled:

Organizational Recruitment Ideas

(There are 16 suggestions in this category)

01. **Put up a sign at your meeting place during your meeting**
It's amazing how many people discover organizations by simply walking or driving past their sign.
02. **Report on your membership numbers and goal progress**
Keep the members up to date on how recruiting is going to motivate them to help
03. **Consider the affordability of chapter dues**
Consider if the dues are a barrier to potential members.

04. **Make sure your contact information is up to date with NARFE Headquarters**
Often these are posted and then forgotten. You may have information out there that isn't correct.
05. **Remove barriers to attendance**
Think about what might stand in the way of someone joining, and try to resolve those issues. For example, you could meet at a popular restaurant but not at its busiest time on its busiest day.
06. **Create a chapter bumper sticker**
Put your name out on the road!
07. **Consider membership options at the chapter level**
Don't forget about NARFE or federation membership incentives
08. **Offer a one-or two-month trial period for new members before they pay dues**
If there's no cost for trying it out, potential members may stay long enough to see how much they like your chapter.
09. **Create a membership drive budget**
Ads, events, and promotional materials all cost money. Prioritize your chapter membership drive by budgeting for it.
10. **Give away something free to new members**
The chance to win a prize always attracts interest.
11. **Designate a Membership chairperson**
Increasing membership is a worthy effort, so appoint a team captain to head it up.
12. **Set a membership goal**
A concrete goal encourages members to recruit new people, and puts everyone on the same page.
13. **Talk to other similar organizations to see how their membership efforts are going, as well as to your own members**
You might be surprised at what you learn.

14. **Track how and why new members join**
That way you can assess the effectiveness of your membership recruiting activities. Cut ineffective ways and pour more resources into the ones that actually work.
15. **Create chapter benefits and resources**
If you can be something that people can't get anywhere else — and something that is really special — your membership will flourish.
16. **Look into points of friction or contention for new members**
Is it as easy as possible for new members to join? If not, what can be done about it?

Following are 82 additional quick and dirty recruitment and retention ideas if you still need more inspiration! Some of these may be similar to some of the others that have been listed. (Thanks to **Membership Matters**, Clubrunner Newsletter, Vol.4 No. 5 November 2004 for the original ideas)

Quick and Dirty Recruitment Ideas

01. Hold a chapter meeting only on membership
02. Give the membership chair some time at every chapter meeting
03. Put together packets for guests to chapters
04. Print chapter business cards with meeting location and time
05. Hold high-profile chapter meetings to emphasize membership
06. Hold wine and cheese receptions for prospective members
07. Ask for recruitment help and advice from other organizations.
08. Have a special guest day
09. Make prospective members feel important
10. Make some meetings social events
11. Build a chapter web site to promote your chapter
12. Start a Facebook page for your chapter
13. Use email to promote your chapter activities and meetings
14. Ask corporations and employers to sponsor or subsidize membership recruiting costs
15. Have a reward program for those who bring in new members
16. Create more fun at your meetings
17. Give a money back guarantee—if after 3 months a new member does not want to be a chapter member, return their fees
18. Invite the media to cover well known speakers

19. Use word of mouth about the benefits of NARFE membership
20. Network with friends and family who might be eligible for membership
21. Follow up with guests who attend a meeting for the first time
22. Place a colored dot on the watch of every member to remind them to bring a guest
23. Lead by example—how many members have you recruited?
24. Have members give talks at other organizations
25. Provide guests with free meals
26. Provide brochures for new employee packets in federal agencies
27. Advertise at sports events
28. Ask nearby chapters for advice on how they recruit
29. Hold joint meetings with other chapters
30. Share your chapter experience with others
31. Participate in community events as a chapter
32. Write letters to the newspaper about chapter events and activities
33. If a prospect can't attend your chapter meeting due to meeting day or time, suggest another nearby chapter
34. Publicize chapter successes, elections, events, in local newspapers
35. Circulate the chapter newsletter widely
36. Design a chapter brochure
37. Hold recruiting events with two or more chapters
38. Form/join a speakers' bureau
39. Obtain and wear NARFE labeled hats and shirts.
40. Mention your chapter at meetings of other organizations during announcements
41. Send chapter newsletters to guests
42. When asked about your leadership skills & career success, tell them about your chapter
43. Ask the Area Vice President to attend a chapter meeting to talk about membership
44. Ask every member to submit 3 prospects to the membership chair
45. Make federation and chapter events FUN
46. Give every member a NARFE decal or bumper sticker for their car
47. Offer NARFE license plates to chapter members
48. Give testimonials about your chapter while guests are at the meeting
49. Repeatedly invite prospective members
50. Practice selling your chapter at chapter meetings—have a one minute elevator speech ready

51. Conduct a Membership Satisfaction Survey
52. Have the chapter president challenge each member to recruit one new member
53. Bring a potential member to a chapter meeting
54. Make direct contact with other civic clubs on recruitment
55. If still working, bring your co-workers to a chapter meeting
56. Have new member kits available
57. Use books, brochures, videos and posters from NARFE HQ
58. Hand out invitation cards for a "Free" chapter lunch
59. Have members constantly promote and rave about your chapter
60. Meet at a good location
61. Assign every member to a 5 person recruitment team - each team brings in a new member every six months
62. Develop a strategic plan as membership is a year-round priority and needs to be planned
63. Have incentives for recruitment
64. Have a large poster that lists all the members who have recruited a new member in the past year
65. Display a thermometer showing progress towards a chapter's membership goal
66. Feature a NARFE "benefit of the month" in the chapter newsletter
67. Welcome and recognize new members with pizzas & invite spouse/partner to attend chapter meetings
68. Develop a welcome letter from the president for all new members
69. Contact all members who have resigned in the past 3 years
70. Use billboards at bus stops and road sides
71. Recognize new members in newsletters
72. Regularly check the NARFE or NC federation web site for ideas
73. Invite spouses to chapter meetings and functions
74. Air a recruiting Public Service Ad on local radio stations
75. Post recruiting flyers on community bulletin boards
76. Ask your friends and neighbors to post recruiting flyers
77. Have a "Bring a Friend Day" at a chapter meeting
78. Speak at clubs and fraternal organizations about NARFE
79. Bring a local federal agency head to a chapter meeting
80. Offer to provide meeting transportation to a prospect
81. Don't give up! Invite a prospect multiple times
82. Pass out M & M candy to remind members that "Membership Matters" and that we need "More Members".

