



SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING A NEWCOMERS CLUB

IN GENERAL:

Newcomer's clubs exist in many cities and towns across Canada. Their purpose is to welcome new people, to help them make friends and to encourage them to become more involved in the community.

Our clubs are diverse; some for women only, others men only, an increasing number are co-ed while some offer family memberships. The Clubs are open to people of all ages and from all walks of life, who have resided in the area for less than a specified period of time. Many Clubs now have a change in circumstances clause as well. This allows people to join if they retire or lose a spouse for example. Each club must determine their criteria for membership.

When clubs reach a sufficient size or differing interest level, as deemed by the Executive Board, the bylaws may be changed to limit the length of time one may stay in Newcomers. This time period, at the discretion of each individual club is usually limited to two or three years. An Alumnae Club/Association may start to allow longer-time residents to continue the friendships they have formed.

Annual membership fees are set by the individual clubs. Newcomers Clubs are non-profit clubs and membership fees are usually collected to meet the operating expenses of the club. Club formation usually consists of a monthly general meeting, plus a variety of special events and group activities. The monthly meeting may be in the afternoon or evening; may take the form of a luncheon, dinner, or may be a planned program with a guest speaker and light refreshments. Ideally, new clubs can hold meetings in an individual's home and then progress to a church hall, library, or any facility, which meets the clubs' needs.

Prospective members usually may attend one or two monthly meetings, and may be encouraged to participate in some of the group activities, before joining the club. There are numerous activities that may interest members; Ladies'/Mens'/ Couples' Bridge or Euchre, Luncheon Group; Couples' Evening Gourmet, Potluck Groups, Athletic Groups, Craft Groups, Moms & Tots, Book Discussion Groups, Theatre/Tour Groups – the possibilities are endless. The groups that exist depend on members' needs and interests and can change over time. These individual groups are more successful to organize on a regular basis if a member volunteers to convene the activity. There is no charge to join a Club's group activities, however members are required to pay for the cost of materials used, admission fees, etc. The Club assumes no responsibility for such costs. Members are usually requested to take turns hosting any group's activities that are held in the homes.



GETTING STARTED:

- 1 **Hold a meeting** of interested people to discuss the format of the Club and to draft the Bylaws. Sample by-laws are available by contacting nnac.treasurer@gmail.com. Each member should have a copy of the Club By-Laws and Membership Roster or at minimum posted on your web site.

Creating and developing bylaws is time consuming but if done correctly will provide guidance, direction and solve conflict for years to come. Bylaws should be voted on and accepted by the membership and reviewed on a regular basis as the dynamics of the club change. Clearly define your purpose and state it in your constitution. When creating your bylaws consider the following as potential articles:

- Membership and Dues – eligibility requirements and disciplinary actions; when dues are due
 - Meetings – types (General Meeting vs. Special Meeting) including voting procedures, quorum requirements, proxy voting and voting procedures (show of hands, secret ballots etc)
 - Prohibitions – soliciting business or sharing of the membership list for example
 - Executive Board and Duties of the Officers and Committees – duties of each clearly defined
 - Elections – nominations, term of office and voting procedures
 - Governance – accepted operating rules of the club (Policy and Procedures)
 - Financial Records, Fiscal Year and Borrowing – review of the records, what is your fiscal year dates and rules relative to borrowing by the club
 - Amendments to Bylaws – process to propose amendments and how they will be accepted or rejected
2. **Fill the Executive positions:** These positions may be appointed or filled on a volunteer basis for the first year, since elections may not be possible in the first year of Club formation. Executive members are expected to attend both General and Executive Meetings. If the Club is formed with low membership, it may be necessary to fill only the mandatory positions: President, Secretary and Treasurer – also Membership Chairperson (if possible). These people will then find it necessary to amalgamate some duties (i.e. publicity, hospitality, social activities, newsletter etc.) and seek some assistance from the membership to perform all required duties. Determine the club's Board Meeting schedule and if you're going to have monthly General Meetings including the membership. Meeting minutes need to be taken at each meeting.
 3. **Budget:** The Club is a non-profit organization and membership fees are used to meet the operating expenses of the Club (i.e. insurance, venue rental, fees, etc.). Membership fees are determined by the individual Club, usually in the range of \$10 to \$50 per year.



4. **Decisions** regarding incorporation, waiver forms and insurance must be made by the club executive. Each club must determine what is best for them in each instance. Incorporation laws and processes vary from province to province, and you must use the guidelines based on the province your club is located.

Further information can be found at:

British Columbia: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/business/not-for-profit-organizations>

Alberta: <https://www.alberta.ca/grants-funding-and-supports-for-non-profits>

Saskatchewan: <https://www.saskculture.ca/programs/organizational-support/organizational-resources/setting-up-a-non-profit-organization>

Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/start-and-operate-not-profit>

New Brunswick:

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.201449.Incorporation_of_Non-Profit_Companies.html

Nova Scotia: <https://novascotia.ca/NonProfitSector/>

Other resources such as Waiver Forms and Insurance can be found on the NNAC website, access is granted upon successful membership application and payment to NNAC.

5. **Draw up a calendar of events** so that activities do not fall on conflicting days. Determine the dates for the monthly general meetings and executive meetings. For example, the general meeting may be held on the 1st or 2nd Tuesday or Wednesday of each month. (Mondays and Fridays are usually too close to the weekend for good attendance; however, it will depend upon the preference of your membership.) Most clubs hold their executive meetings one or two weeks before each general meeting in order to have sufficient time to plan the general meeting, do publicity, etc.

6. **Plan the Monthly General Meeting.** It may be held in the afternoon or the evening; it may take the form of a luncheon or dinner, or it may be a planned program with a guest speaker and light refreshments.

If possible, make inquiries within your community to see if there may be a meeting room available in a church, library, school, etc. Usually, facilities are available at a reasonable cost (or sometimes, free) to non-profit organizations. Usually, the Vice-President is responsible for obtaining the meeting place and planning the program. Set up a communication network for club members, whether it by email, Facebook page or a web site.

PROGRAM: Usually consists of a guest speaker or demonstration. Try to have a good variety with some light and serious topics. Some ideas are: speakers on community services, local history, health and nutrition, cooking, parenting, recycling, travel, etc. As a non-profit organization, Newcomers usually cannot afford a speaker's fee; however, many clubs give their guest speaker a small gift. As a suggestion; if a speaker has the potential of obtaining business as a result of his/her attendance, then a thank you card is sufficient. The Membership Chairperson (or Vice-President) and the Treasurer should be available at the door to greet new members and to accept membership



fees. Other Executive members should make themselves available to greet members and guests, and to make them feel welcome.

Not all clubs have monthly General Meetings. For example Toronto has a monthly Board meeting but only gather all members in September and June. They provide other opportunities for all members to gather together. Each club will decide how best to meet the needs and interests of their members and community.

7. Publicity: There are many avenues of publicity available free of charge to non-profit organizations:

(a) Local Newspaper: usually will make announcements in the community events section free of charge; may be interested in doing an article about the Club; and may wish to cover some of the Club's special events. Photographs are always good publicity

(b) Radio and Cable T.V.: make community service announcements and may wish to do an interview

(c) Club Brochure: to be distributed to people and posted at various locations (library, supermarkets, and other businesses);

(d) List the Club with the local Chamber of Commerce, the Information Centre for the community, Parks and Recreation Department or with realtors and their offices.

(e) Social Media: Facebook page, Instagram etc

Publicity releases should include a description of the Club and where and when the general meeting is held. In some cases, you may be able to elaborate on some of the activities as well. Always include at least one or two names and contact information for further details.

8. Newsletter: Each club publishes a monthly newsletter to notify members of the general meeting and other upcoming events. A club will usually elect a newsletter editor, who is part of the executive group. In a very small Newcomers Club, a core executive member, or a volunteer from the general membership will often assume the job of newsletter editor.

9. Membership Roster: The Membership Roster should be available to all members; posting it on your secured web site in a member's only section is a great way for everyone to have the most up-to-date list. A roster should contain the following for each member: Name, Address, Telephone Number, email address and partner's name. Other information that could be made available through the Membership Application would be: names of children, birth date of member (for celebratory purposes), where the member moved from and any other particulars the Executive might find necessary. Clubs should take steps to protect the contact details of their members. This can include such things as: ensuring these are on a secure site, ensuring members are advised to only use for contact purposes, advising members to shred any previous paper copies of rosters etc. Most clubs state in their By-Laws that the membership roster is "NOT TO BE USED FOR SOLICITING OR SELLING".



10. Activity Groups: Activity groups are formed when there is sufficient interest in a particular activity. These groups are self-supporting and may make their own rules as long as they do not conflict with the By-Laws of the club. A second Vice-President or Activities coordinator/director is responsible for the club's activities groups. This position appoints the convenors and helps to organize new activities, and acts as a liaison between the groups and the executive. One must be a member in good standing to participate in activities. If a particular activity takes place in the home, members usually take turns hosting. There is usually no fee to join activity groups, however, members are responsible for any expenses they may incur.

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