

Steps to a Successful Membership Program

- Have a concise description of the organization and its mission – In a few sentences the information must prove that the organization has a special and important impact.
- Be active – Have a lot going on. Prove that the organization is vital and worthy of their membership. Tell them about everything happening.
- Get everyone involved in recruiting members. Membership programs can't be left to just one person, a committee to focus the effort is a good idea.
- Organize a tracking system – Keeping track of members is crucial for maintaining the membership and to use the information to prospect for additional fundraising. Create a system that is easy to use and accessible by more than one person in the organization. It can be a computer database or spread sheet or some sort of card or binder system.
Information to be included should be: Name, Contact information (Address, Phone, Email), Date of initial membership, Date and amount of each membership renewal
- Additional information (relationship to organization, special needs, etc.)
- Create categories of membership – Select a few options and name them with a mission related theme. Depending on the organization you can offer student, senior and family rates. Use no more than five categories.
- Never include a lifetime category – These are your strongest supporters, you want to keep them giving.
- Offer membership perks – Be creative. Think about what makes your organization special. Update letters, newsletters, special tours or events, discounts on admission or events, etc.
- Create a Membership Benefit Logo – This is a good tool if you have a newsletter that lists special programs and events for members.
- Survey your current membership and find out what they most value in their membership (newsletter, historical journal, free admission, etc.) That way you can focus your membership renewal effort on topics that are likely to engage members. Also, ask them what they would find the most valuable addition to a membership package.
- Remind them to renew – Whether once a year for small organizations to monthly for larger, it is essential to send renewal letters to keep them paying the dues.
- If possible, get demographics on your membership. Knowing some of the information may help you target where large groups of potential members might be.
- Survey why people don't join your organization and what appeals most to them about joining. Some heritage organizations get the idea they want to get more student members; in order for them to get students to join they should first ask themselves if they offer membership perks or activities that are enticing to students.
- Ask. Ask. Ask. – Ask people to join at every event and in every letter.