

NARFE



GEORGIA FEDERATION OF CHAPTERS

MEMBERSHIP PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT DEVELOPMENT RETENTION

**THIS PLAN SHOULD ALWAYS BE USED IN CONJUNCTION
WITH NARFE HANDBOOK FH-19**

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FEDERATION POLICY - "IN NUMBERS THERE IS STRENGTH"

It takes more than desire to increase the membership. We know that recruiting of new members does not just happen. It takes work and dedicated effort from the entire membership. Members are the backbone of our organization and recruitment and retention are the constant challenge facing NARFE. Thank goodness we have such members in our Georgia Federation and Chapters.

Do we know why people join our Association? Surveys conducted by NARFE National found that the most frequently cited reasons for joining and renewing memberships were:

1. To support NARFE's legislative agenda to protect or enhance our earned benefits.
2. To obtain advice on any of those benefits.
3. To receive the informative monthly publication, *NARFE* magazine.

If this is true of NARFE membership, then we should use these reasons as the base to form our recruitment message. Potential members should be told that **WE ARE THE ONLY ORGANIZATION EXCLUSIVELY DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF ACTIVE AND RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.**

Upon retirement, an employee's personnel or human resources office has no further legal requirement to help them. OPM's Retirement Operations Center in Boyers, PA officially now assumes those type responsibilities. Fortunately, NARFE can and does compliment the OPM Retirement Operations Center with caring and knowledgeable local Service Officers (all volunteers) who are available for free to all Federal retirees, their spouses, or survivors. If we had to pay for all the services NARFE furnishes, we couldn't afford them.

We have had tremendous success with our legislative endeavors in recent years and have the Legislative Department to keep a watchful eye on our benefits. But, as history has taught us, past success does not guarantee the same for the future. In today's constrained resource environment, entitlements will be a target of opportunity.

NARFE's strength and its effectiveness is dependent upon the size of our membership and the dedication of our leadership and members. Something that bears repeating - the only way we can continually stop harmful changes in policy relating to our earned employment related financial and health security benefits is our influence in Congress - Congress listens to CLOUT and we get our CLOUT through recognition of "membership power" - power in the number of members, today and tomorrow. Incidentally, we have been told by elected officials that they consider a single contact from a NARFE member to represent an estimated 3-6 other voters who feel the same way. And our elected officials know how to count. **THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS.**

ORGANIZATION

At the National level there is a NARFE organizational unit devoted solely to membership recruitment and retention. They have a wealth of literature, pamphlets, video tapes, information, etc., which they will gladly share. They can be reached by telephone at 1-800-627-3394, or E-mail at rr@narfe.org.

At the state (Federation) level, the Vice President is charged with the responsibility of the Federation membership recruitment and retention programs and serves as the Chair of the Membership Recruitment and Retention Committees. He/She is assisted in this responsibility by the Membership Recruitment Sub-Committee and Membership Retention Sub-Committee Chairs, and the District Vice Presidents.

At the Chapter level, the Membership Chairperson (usually the First Vice President or an Appointee) has the main responsibility of membership recruitment, retention, and development. This person should also select a committee of other members to assist in performing these duties.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership by example, words, and deeds can create an environment that promotes an active membership program. Federation officers, chapter officers and committee chairpersons all play important roles in the Membership Program.

The Membership Program should be an integral part of each and every Federation and Chapter meeting. Goals should be set and progress toward its written goals reported. No matter how large or small the gathering, some time should be devoted to the subject of membership. A review of the latest M-112 Report (Monthly Chapter Activity Report) is a very good format to use as a report at each Chapter meeting.

Written membership plans should be prepared. A portion of the budget should to be set aside for the Membership Program, so that efforts and successes can be rewarded. For example, reimbursement for mileage and parking fees, and printing and postage for related printed correspondence should be considered. Matching funds are available to help defray costs.

The Membership Program should involve as many people as is possible. Invite and welcome members to assist in the program. Create jobs based on skills and abilities for any volunteers willing to participate, such as phoning or emailing prospects, members who have received second dues renewal notices, or members who were dropped. Include as many members as possible in decision making and goal setting. Create a sense of teamwork throughout the chapter.

Your chapter should adopt a policy such as ALL MEMBERS ARE BY VIRTUE OF CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP MEMBERS OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE. This should appear in the chapter newsletter from time to time.

INCENTIVES

The National Office continually develops Incentive Awards Programs in which NARFE members and/or chapters may participate. These programs are published in the *NARFE Magazine*, *Recruiters Journal* and *Quarterly News* as they are implemented.

FEDERATION

Each year at the State Convention, recognition is given Chapters that have had the largest increase in membership percentages

CHAPTERS

The following are suggestions your chapter may wish to try. These are not all inclusive - you may have other and better ideas.

1. Be sure to recognize new members at each chapter meeting. (Also give them a “New Member Kit”. Each chapter should make one up.)
2. Be sure to recognize guests (potential members) at chapter meetings.
3. At chapter meetings, recognize a member who has recruited a member.
4. Give recruiters a Certificate of Recognition. (These are available from the National Office.)
5. Give each new member a free lunch.
6. Give each recruiter one free lunch for each new member recruited. (Or any number determined by your chapter.)
7. Give one years’ free chapter dues to each new member or recruiter.
8. Give a discount on chapter dues for spouses.
9. Offer every new member a position (job) on some committee in your chapter.

GOAL SETTING

Georgia chapters have done a good job in recruiting new members. Now we need to concentrate on retaining these new members. Recruitment of new members seems to get all of the attention because Recruiting is exciting and success can be a great cause for celebration. But for the long term health of NARFE, we've got to put equal focus on Retention. Over the past years we have seen our state membership remain at just over 8,000. The NARFE Membership Department is consistently developing new membership plans. Their recruitment plans are designed to bring in new members who are currently active federal employees (AFE'S), or especially those will shortly be retiring from the Federal Service. They have also provided advertisement in local papers to obtain prospective member lists. New member and prospective member data are passed on to the chapters. This is helpful in our membership drives.

FEDERATION

To monitor our progress the Federation District Vice President receives copies of the Chapter M-112 and M-114 Membership Reports. After review, the information is summarized and provided to each District Vice President for their information and to share with the chapters.

District Vice Presidents are key players in our membership efforts. Roles they play are 1) Assist chapters in setting goals, 2) Review chapter membership plans, 3) Spread good ideas among the chapters, 4) Monitor the progress of the chapters, 5) Motivate the chapters to achieve success in their membership recruitment, development, and retention, 6) Acknowledge those chapters that are doing well, and 7) Help those chapters that are not doing well.

These District Vice Presidents can be helpful in assisting our Pre-Retirement Seminar speakers by finding volunteers to assist and coordinate with employing agencies in their districts when Pre-Retirement Seminars will be given.

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The Membership Committee, in coordination with the officers and chapter members need to set a yearly goal. The goal needs to be realistic and attainable. But it should also be a goal which will require some extra effort and creativity. The committee may wish to break the goal down into segments such as:

1. A monthly Goal
2. The number of spouses to be brought in as members
3. Increase the number of member renewals
4. Increase the number of new members
5. Increase the number of members who participate in the dues withholding program
6. Increase the number to be 'resurrected' from the Second Dues Notice list

7. Increase the number changed from the “LSA” (National Only) status to chapter membership.
8. Re-enlisting members who dropped their membership.

MEMBER RECRUITMENT

Member recruitment involves attracting two categories of federal employees who have different and somewhat diverse needs. We have long recruited the retired or soon to be retired federal employees. Most of these people were under the old Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). In the 1980's the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) was introduced and now most of the current and near or newly retired are under the FERS. Beside the differences in retirement systems, we must realize the active federal employees have younger families, value their limited family time, and have different priorities than our retired or soon to be retired members. We must consider these differences when we attempt to recruit both member categories.

SOURCES FOR RECRUITMENT

Pre-Retirement Seminars:

Pre-Retirement Seminars are excellent recruiting sources. These are often conducted by the agency itself, by OPM, or by an independent contractor usually under the auspices of the Human Resources Office. Attendees usually are current employees within three to five years or more from retirement.

The Georgia Federation will assist in sending a NARFE representative if permission is obtained from the agency conducting the seminar. However, if permission cannot be obtained for a speaker, those in charge will almost always allow distribution of a NARFE Recruitment Kit. These kits can be obtained from the National Office. (Tel: 1-800-627-3394 - E-Mail: rr@narfe.org)

The National Office has additional information on Pre-Retirement Seminars listed in NARFE Handbook FH-19 (Membership Development Manual).

Open Season Health Fairs:

Open Season Health Fairs are outstanding vehicles to recruit active federal employees (AFE's). We have friends in the Federal Employee Program Account Consultant for Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Georgia, located at 3350 Peachtree Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30326, office phone 404-923-3172. They will informally provide a listing of all locations in Georgia that Blue Cross/Blue Shield will be attending Health Fairs to the Georgia Federation Recruitment Sub-Committee Chair. (This is normally in October/November of each year).

The Georgia Federation Membership Recruitment Sub-Committee Chair will assist in sending NARFE Representatives if permission is granted from the agency facilitating the Health Fair. Health Fairs are usually under the direction of the Human Resources Office of the facilitating organization. The Sub-Committee Chair will contact chapters about upcoming Health Fairs in their locations.

Service Centers:

Service Centers, and the volunteers who work in them do an excellent job with recruiting. We now have several service centers operating in Georgia. Should any chapter wish to explore establishing another, please contact your District Vice President.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM):

Twice each year (usually in March and September) there is a NARFE mailing, with followup mailings in eight weeks to all recent retirees by the National Office. This is a blind mailing, meaning that OPM generates the listing, furnishes it to a contractor, and NARFE supplies the contractor with the material to be mailed. NOTE: OPM does not give NARFE the listing of retirees.

National Only Members:

Twice each year your chapter receives a M-114 Report (Semi-Annual Membership Roster). Included in this report is a listing of National Only Members. These are members who have national membership only. Why not try one more time to invite them to become Chapter members.

Agency Associations:

Many groups of retirees of an agency have been organized and meet periodically. If these become known and you can get an invitation to attend, this would be fertile ground to make a presentation on NARFE.

M-112 Report (Monthly Chapter Activity Report)

On this report is a listing of "New Prospective Members". This list is generated from persons who have contacted the National Office from the semi-annual mailings, advertisements, requests for information, and etc. These persons should be contacted by the Chapter Membership Committee.

Spouses:

Sign up the spouse. It gives member and spouse something they can do together so that they have a common interest.

Former Spouses and Surviving Spouses:

Here is where we can possibly be of the most service. If they aren't familiar with the policies and procedures of OPM, membership in NARFE can be a valuable asset.

New Members:

When you sign up a new member, ask about possible contacts in the currently active work force or for others who just retired from their Agency. New members are an excellent source of good prospects.

Newspaper Advertisement:

Many newspapers will accept an announcement of your meeting and print it free. Non-member active and retired federal employees will often call after seeing this ad. Be sure to include a telephone number in your ad.

Credit Unions:

If you are a member or know of a credit union that serves federal employees and their families, inquire about the possibility of including a NARFE brochure in the next mailing of their quarterly statements/newsletters. These brochures are available from the National Office. (Tel: 1-800-627-3394, E-Mail: rr@narfe.org)

Using some of the sources suggested above, your own members, plus from NARFE advertising, and a multitude of other sources, a listing of prospective members can be generated. It is imperative that the chapter FOLLOW-UP on these possible members. These people are obviously interested in NARFE membership.

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

An integral part of Membership Development is **Retention**. Retention must start the first day a new member interacts with our organization and it should never stop. It is a continuous activity. Retention is a way of life that is woven into the fabric of our organization. This section will consist of various thoughts and ideas that have been successful when applied at numerous chapters.

Each new member is special. Each will bring unique skills to the chapter. Using these skills and getting the new member to participate will give the chapter a useful and long lasting member.

Each member has joined NARFE for various reasons. Members who join before retirement do so for reasons that may be different from those members recruited after retirement. Once recruited, that member is **your** member and needs to be cultivated and nurtured. It may seem strange, but once a member joins he/she becomes the most likely member not to renew. That's the reason that the first year of membership should be called the **Conversion Year**.

Each new member should be sent a **Welcome Letter** and given a **Welcome Packet**.

The chapter greeter should introduce the new member to the presiding officer so that the member can be formally recognized at this meeting by the chapter membership.

Name tags should be worn at meetings. This will help new members get better acquainted with the chapter members.

New members should be encouraged to sign up for dues withholding. This usually guarantees membership retention.

Involve the new member in functions of the chapter. Find the new members interests and then find a committee or a position which they can be assigned. An active member is more likely to remain a member.

Use the local media to have published announcements of meetings. Include what the program will be, and the time and place of the meeting. Also include telephone number for contact.

An active telephone committee, that contacts each member, should inform member of the meeting time and place, program, and any other special information. This committee can also collect information from the members as to illness or other information in which the chapter would have an interest. E-mail may also be used to augment the telephone committee

Programs should be planned that are of interest to the membership and limited to a set amount of time. Meetings that are “brisk” help attendance. People lose interest if a meeting is long and drawn out. Have a **Meeting Agenda** to follow.

Each member should be given a roster of chapter membership. Due to privacy concerns, you may wish to limit the amount of information you provide.

Where possible a “newsletter” should be prepared for the chapter. This is a sure way of reaching all of the membership, including those who are unable to attend meeting because of illness or still being employed. Templates and assistance in starting a chapter newsletter is available from the Federation newsletter editor.

Committee Chairpersons should give periodic reports of the accomplishments of their committees.

The membership committee should report on members who are in arrears on their dues and contact by phone and/or letter those who have received a “Second Dues Notice”.

Find a worthwhile project within the community and have the chapter contribute funds or manpower. This will familiarize the community with NARFE and possibly furnish some leads to new members.

THE CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

This section will discuss the duties, planning, and work of the Chapter Membership Chairperson and the Membership Committee.

1. Order membership forms, pamphlets, and publications. Use Requisition (Form F-18) for printed supplies.
2. Contact NARFE National Headquarters. (Tel: 1-800-627-3394, E-Mail: rr@narge.org) Ask for help. They will send you kits, pamphlets, etc. which will aid you immensely.
3. Distribute material to all committee members for reading and study.
4. Get organized. Exactly what approaches are you going to take? Delegate. Who will do what?
5. Set goals that are challenging, yet attainable.
6. Prepare a plan.
7. Present the plan at a chapter meeting.
8. Make periodic reports to chapter members
9. At the close of the year, evaluate your plan and results.
10. At the close of the year, recognize those who have played a role in your membership efforts.

11. Consider some week-end or night time meetings to attract Active Federal Employees and retirees who are still working at another job.

IMPORTANT: When you obtain your basic forms and study material be sure to get a copy of FH-19 (Membership Development Manual).

MISCELLANEOUS HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. The Membership Committee should prepare a plan that covers recruitment, development, and retention of members. This plan should be discussed and approved by the Chapter Executive Committee. And, importantly, it should be presented at a chapter meeting.
2. Has someone mentioned forming a NEW CHAPTER? This is an idea that needs to be pursued immediately. Should this possibility be mentioned, contact your District Vice President who will look into the matter and give assistance.
3. Should an employing agency have its own newsletter, will they let you put in a short piece about NARFE?
4. Would it be worthwhile to have one of your meetings with a designated theme “BRING AN ACTIVE OR RETIRED FRIEND”?
5. What do you do with copies of the *NAREF* magazine after they have been read? Why not get three or four volunteers to take copies to the local libraries, government offices, hospitals (and their libraries), senior citizens centers, beauty parlors, doctors offices, etc.?
6. Devote at least one chapter meeting each year to review, summarize and critique membership recruitment, retention, and development.
7. It might help to have a table, which is in full view and not in a corner, on which is displayed an abundant stock of member applications and other NARFE recruitment literature. (This is not only for new members but any member who wishes copies.)
8. **The best recruiter of all is the chapter member, who in his/her daily contact in the community, church, at the grocery store, etc., tells an active or retired friend about NARFE.**

A FEW LAST THOUGHTS

1. NARFE National Office has more ideas and materials than you can possibly think of on your own.
2. Don't try to do everything. Pick out a few substantive approaches to membership recruitment, development, and retention.
3. Delegate. The Chairperson cannot do it all. Divide up chores and assign one to each committee member.
4. And lastly: Results are usually directly proportional to the endeavor invested.

