



Workshop 2

Building Your Chapter Network: Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

Recruiting and retaining chapter volunteers is the key to building support, spreading the work and developing your chapter network. EVERY chapter, no matter how big or how long it's been active, can benefit from thinking creatively on how to grow your chapter and retain volunteers.

When considering how best to build your chapter network, it's important to consider both quantity (# of chapter members within your network) and quality (depth of relationship) of chapter members. Casting a wide net and recruiting a variety of chapter members is important to spread awareness and gain chapter visibility, but a tribe of chapter volunteers may not be realistic for your chapter, or sustainable. Committed volunteers who funnel in new chapter members and donors who add value to your chapter may be more realistic for your chapter and just as impactful. Or maybe it's the reverse scenario for your chapter.

It's important to learn how YOUR chapter operates because recruiting and retaining volunteers is a dance — and sometimes the scale may tip in one direction and tilt the other. Finding the ways in which your chapter uniquely engages with volunteers will provide you more insight on where to spend your time and energy.

To create a sustainable chapter that withstands the test of time, consider ways of improving both the recruitment and retainment of volunteers within your chapter.

Activity

10
mins

Go around the room and share two successful ways that you've gained new chapter volunteers or retained current leaders, and one thing you've tried that has not worked.

- Are any of the ideas shared something new that you haven't considered? Have you tried these ways of working and they haven't worked? Why did or didn't it work? The closer you're able to pinpoint the reason, the more insight you have on ways to continue to build your chapter.

20
mins

Partner with someone (in groups of two or three) and discuss ways of **recruiting**

new volunteers...

- New networks (10 minutes): What new group you would like to reach out to in your community. Maybe it's a mothers' group, teacher association, networking group, young professionals or university alumni group, neighborhood committee, book club, grandmothers' group, intermural sports team, single dads' group — you name it!
- New partners with businesses (10 minutes): What company in your city you would like to work with. Maybe it's your own organization, your partner's, or your best friend's business. Maybe it's a restaurant that serves food from one of our program countries, or a new store or restaurant that would benefit from some cross-promotion. Ask each other: Why do you want to collaborate with them? How do you think that you can link up with them?

30
mins

Partner with someone (in groups of two or three) and discuss ways of **retaining** new volunteers...

- Deepening current relationships (10 minutes): How you and your chapter can nurture the relationships you already have in place with dedicated volunteers. Maybe it's asking each committed member to hold their own chapter event within their own networks (ex: an intimate "destination dining dinner" event or film screening with their friends or co-workers and suggest opportunities for them to get more involved)
- Staying engaged (10 minutes): How you can stay engaged with your volunteers (ex: hold monthly chapter meetings to plan and collaborate, email reminders, etc.). How you can celebrate the successes of your chapter members (social media posts/shout-outs on the chapter Facebook page, emails, thanks during team meetings, etc.).
- Holding each other accountable (10 minutes): How many meetings your chapter holds a year (monthly, quarterly, etc.). How you can hold each other accountable on action items and ideas that you discuss during chapter meetings (ex: emails with to-do's and next steps, etc.).

10
mins

Go around the room and share two ways you can develop a relationship with someone in your community tomorrow (or when you return to your chapter) that will get your chapter to the next level

- Consider developing relationships that you may need in the future and

don't yet have (relationships with restaurants for "destination dining events", businesses for in-kind donations for auction items, donors that have connections to various community members that you'd like to connect with, etc.)

Further reading: Review the Succession Plan below to consider ways in which you can set your chapter up for success for years to come.

Chapter Succession Plan

Life happens, and it's important to have a plan in place for when life plans direct you off the Room to Read chapter path and onto a new life adventure. The Room to Read chapters team understands that although we'd love to have you on the chapter team forever, things change, priorities shift, new responsibilities take shape and decisions to support those new life happenings must occur.

A succession plan is vital to continue the incredible work and energy that chapter leaders have spent time on implementing within their chapter. With a new chapter leader lined up and roles and responsibilities handed off, the work that the chapter leader has done isn't lost and the chapter can continue to build off the previous chapter successes and reach new heights.

If you are deciding to leave your chapter, the Room to Read chapters team asks that you create a succession plan one-three months before leaving. We've created a four-step succession plan below to help guide you in this process.

1. ELECT A NEW CHAPTER LEADER

- a. Is there a chapter member who is interested in taking on your role?
- b. If not, is there someone or a few community members you met that you think may be interested in a chapter leadership role to replace you?
- c. It's important to trust your judgement on who YOU think will be the best fit for your role. And be creative! If there doesn't seem to be a chapter leader replacement available within the next few months, see if you can disperse your chapter leadership roles into a few core committee roles to fill.

2. SCHEDULE A MEETING

- a. Schedule time to connect with the new chapter leader. Share tidbits of information gained, as well as contacts, links, documents created and shared, email and password access, best-practices, advice and more. Share everything that may be helpful!

3. DEVELOP PLAN TO TRANSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. When developing a transition plan, it may be helpful to consider the questions below...
 - Will there be an overlap in chapter responsibilities so the new chapter leader can watch and learn from the previous chapter leader?
 - When will responsibilities transition to the new leader? (ex: two months)
 - When and how will the chapter leader update be communicated to the chapter team? (ex: chapter team monthly meeting followed by a chapter team email?)

4. ALERT THE ROOM TO READ CHAPTERS TEAM

- a. Reach out to alert the Room to Read chapters team at Chapters@RoomtoRead.org and share your chapter update with the subject line “Chapter Leader Transitioning and Succession Plan” and include information such as, the reason for chapter leadership transitioning, dates of the chapter transition and the new leader and their contact information (please CC them on the email)
- b. The Room to Read chapters team will work to schedule a chapter onboarding call with the new leader to get them up to speed on all chapter updates and happenings.