



JULY 2020

# SMALL AND RURAL CHAPTERS

## Guide to Chapter Management



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



## INTRODUCTION

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Every UNA-USA chapter is unique, bearing different responsibilities and priorities. There is no one way to manage a chapter, as chapters should operate in consideration of the community surrounding them. For larger chapters, there are specific strategies that may not be as relevant or applicable to smaller-sized chapters, and chapters in small towns or rural areas.

This guide is designed to help small or rural chapters with chapter management and community engagement. Here you will learn what to focus on as a chapter leader and how to build a strong community of UN advocates.

## OVERVIEW

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This guide will cover the following topics:

- Operations and Leadership
- Recruitment and Engagement
- Community
- Education and Awareness

## OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

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Vision, mission, and values, SWOT analysis, KPIs and OKRs – defining these elements could help improve the functions of your chapter. But it doesn't need to be this complicated, and you don't need to establish a formal business plan for your chapter.

What is most important is to reflect upon the intentions and goals of your chapter. The following strategies will help identify direction and motivation for your chapter leaders and members. Remember, quality over quantity.



# OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

## Set Goals

- Take some time to discuss and write down goals for your chapter with other chapter leaders, and possibly other members.

Examples of goals include: increase membership, plan more joint events with other chapters or partners, and encourage members to regularly attend meetings

- Try to outline a few steps your chapter can take to achieve these goals. Once you've completed a step, your chapter can celebrate this achievement and inspire your members to continue working towards the goal.
  - Setting increments will help make the goals seem less daunting and more attainable.

Goal: Plan More Joint Events

- 1) Research other organizations in your community and make a list.
- 2) Contact these organizations.
- 3) Plan the event.

- Goals can be for your chapter, or they can be specific to a certain event.

An example of a broad goal is to recruit more youth members, while an example of a specific goal is to facilitate the signing of 50 petitions during an advocacy event.

# OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP



## Gather Feedback

- After each event or activity, have attendees fill out a short questionnaire to share their feedback.
  - This will help you learn what your participants think about your event, and how you can make your event better.
  - If an event was not successful, consult participants and community members in the reflection process.
  - Collaboratively discuss how to improve the next event. If participants have a hand in this process, they may be more inclined to attend the next event in hopes it will thrive.
- In addition, hold a brainstorming session during a chapter meeting so members can help think of new ideas.
  - This is another way to learn the preferences of your members, while showing them you value their input.

By involving members directly in the planning or decision-making processes, your members will be more committed to and passionate about your chapter.

## Share results

- If you have specific results from an event or initiative, relay it to your members and the public.

If your chapter successfully facilitated the signing of 50 petitions, broadcast it! Let people know the impact they are making and encourage them to continue participating.

# OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

## Cultivate Passion

- Leadership transitions can be tough. Try to identify one or two members whom you can train to eventually take your position.
  - Expose them to your planning process and regularly converse with them about your personal passion for UN advocacy.
  - Help them identify and build their own passions, so they are motivated to sustain the chapter after the founding leaders leave.

Visit UNA-USA's [Leadership and Operations page](#) for more leadership resources, specifically, the "[Board Leadership Succession Planning](#)" Guide.

- Though formal leadership positions like President, Secretary, or Treasurer can help structure the roles of your chapter leaders, be open to expanding leadership with additional roles.
  - Identify the individual strengths and interests of your fellow leaders and curate responsibilities according to these insights.
  - This will ensure your leaders are confident and passionate about their roles.
  - Be prepared to take on multiple responsibilities. Often with smaller chapters, leaders have to double up on roles.

If a member is artistic and interested in design, assign them to create all visual communications including flyers, pamphlets, presentation slides, etc.

## RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

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Community is at the heart of UNA. Without active members, chapter events and activities lack purpose and impact.

Regardless of the size of your chapter, finding and sustaining membership is a core focus of chapter management. Approach this task thoughtfully and keep in mind the context and character of your community.



# RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

## Diversify Recruitment Strategies

- Employ various mediums for community engagement.
  - Use a mixture of social media, email communications, printed communications, and in-person dialogue to maximize your reach within your community.

Visit UNA-USA's [Communications](#) page for more communications resources.

- Study and categorize your target community members to learn how they might differ in their preferences of receiving information.
- At the same time, keep in mind the likely close-knit nature of small towns. Though face-to-face contact may require more effort, it could yield greater interest and commitment.
  - During the pandemic, chapters with small membership may have the option to plan physically-distanced meetings in small groups.

If in-person meetings are not a safe option, explore inventive ways to engage members by reading our [Guide to Creative Virtual Events](#).

- Facilitate meaningful connections by visiting common gathering places in your community, such as a church or farmer's market.
- Visit local groups (cultural societies, Rotary clubs, Scout clubs, etc.) or community centers to promote your chapter.
- Plan bring-a-friend activities to encourage current members to play a part in recruitment and invite their friends to regular meetings.





# RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

## Study Your "Audience"

- Keep in mind the general availability of your members and prospective members. If your members are mostly students or working professionals, try to plan meetings and events after-hours or on weekends.
  - At the same time, keep in mind most members have busy schedules and other commitments. Don't be discouraged if attendance is low.
  - Stick to your schedule and keep up your efforts. Consistency and regular activity yield greater interest and attendance compared to unpredictable and irregular programming.
- Periodically plan focused or niche events to target a specific community demographic.

Plan an event on global health to attract those interested in health, or plan an event on climate change to attract those interested in environmental conservation.

- Strive to make chapter activities and programs accessible to a wide range of people.
  - If community members don't have regular access to Wi-Fi or a computer, plan more in-person activities and actions.
  - Devote more time to in-person recruitment and create more printable communications, like pamphlets or flyers. Distribute these to community centers, local businesses, or schools.

If your chapter plans an advocacy initiative, rather than assigning members to sign a petition at home, provide them the resources to sign the petition on-demand at a meeting.

# RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

- Work to include community members who may have resource insecurities or greater commitments, like caring for a dependent.
  - Provide a meal at a focus group or conduct virtual/phone meetings for those who cannot come in person.
- Consider implementing professional development programs to equip community members with valuable skills and knowledge they will benefit from.
  - If your chapter has student or youth members, utilize resources like the Passport Series, MyDiplomat, or Innerview to help them develop their professional skills with a globalized mindset.
  - These strategies can incentivize members to join your chapter, as they will gain access to something beneficial in return.

The UNA Northern Michigan University Chapter set up a “Career Closet” with donated professional clothing available to students for free. Students can look professional when they discuss UN topics and global crises with the public.

## Build Family

- Capitalize on the “small town, close-knit” nature of your area and create a close-knit microcommunity as a chapter. Even if your chapter is small, take pride in the “family” environment created as a result.
  - Convey this as a strength when recruiting new members. By joining your chapter, people can contribute to global action and will have a place to belong where their opinions are valued.

# RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

- Celebrate new members when they join, and acclimate them to your chapter.
  - By providing immediate support to new members, they will feel included and want to stay a member of your chapter.

Host a new member luncheon every quarter, or pair new members with current members for a coffee chat.



## COMMUNITY

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A smaller town and smaller chapter may permit greater personal connection between your members. Capitalize on this connection throughout all chapter activities and events.

By promoting the close community of your chapter and working to strengthen unity within your chapter, members will become more effective UN advocates.





# COMMUNITY

## Build Connections

- Reach out to local officials and local representatives to talk about your chapter and how it is involved in the community.
  - During these discussions, invite members to explain why they advocate for the UN.

Reference UNA-USA's [Advocacy Resources page](#) to learn how to interface with your representatives and what to discuss.

- Invite a staff member from your local office to a chapter event, like a panel presentation.
  - This will establish a relationship between your chapter and the local government that represents your community.
  - It will also give your chapter credibility and possibly attract more people to your event.
- Prioritize in-person contact. Unify your smaller community with face-to-face meetings and events to cultivate personal connections between members.
  - Market your chapter during community fairs or events, and in times of social distancing, opt for video or phone communications over email communications.
    - These strategies will allow members to put faces (or voices) to your chapter and feel more comfortable interacting with your chapter.

Host open houses and other events open to the full community. In the early stages of your chapter, consider holding more open-community events than member-exclusive events. This will gradually build interest as your community becomes familiar with your chapter.



# COMMUNITY

- Display public and active leadership to community members. Regardless of the size or location of your chapter, a confident and motivated leader gives your chapter a strong voice in the community.

By simply conveying your passions for your chapter and the UN, members will recognize your commitment and want to stand with you.

- If your chapter is a campus chapter, build awareness and membership by connecting with professors and other campus organizations.
  - Host joint events or meetings with other clubs that have similar interests (such as Model UN, international affairs, global studies, sustainability, human rights, social justice, etc.)
  - Hold brief presentations in different classes and enlist the help of professors to promote your chapter. Provide professors with flyers, pamphlets, and/or UNA merchandise.
  - Set up a table or booth in an area with high traffic on campus to promote your chapter.
    - This will build widespread awareness of your chapter and the UN on your campus.

Allow students passing by to take direct advocacy actions, like signing a petition in exchange for a UNA sticker.



# COMMUNITY

## Collaborate with Your Community

- Collaborate with other rural or small chapters for special events. Virtual platforms make it easy to connect across long distances.
  - By connecting your members with the broader UNA community, they can witness the ripple effect of widespread UN advocacy.

Plan a roundtable discussion where chapters can discuss how specific SDGs are being implemented in their communities.

Before the event, assign each member to research or reflect on an SDG. This will not only prepare them for the event, but also will increase awareness about the UN.

- On a special occasion (such as UN Day, World Refugee Day, etc.) collaborate with a larger chapter in your state or region. This will engage members with other passionate UN advocates who have similar interests.
- Engage community members directly in the brainstorming and decision-making processes. To complement your leadership board, consider creating committees or focus groups that integrate members.
  - This will help defer some responsibility to community members and give them a platform to contribute to the chapter's success. Members will feel like their voices are valued and may be more committed to your chapter.
- Seek partnerships with local organizations and other community groups.
  - Partnerships can help integrate your chapter into the community, especially if it was recently established.

# COMMUNITY

- For additional guidance on partnerships: Reference Partnerships & Collaborations Committee [Facebook group](#), as well as UNA-USA's Events, Fundraising, and [Partnerships Resources page](#).

View the Partnerships & Collaborations Committee [Self-Assessment Workbook](#) and [Powerpoint Toolkit](#) for in-depth steps on Partnerships. Be sure to read the case study on the Boulder Chapter's partnership (UNA Boulder has 40 members total).

- Partnerships do not have to be extremely formal, and they can be one-time relationships formed for a single event.
  - The most important aspect to focus on is simply the opportunity to share knowledge, interests, and passions with another group of people.
- Attend community events or conferences (as well as virtual events) to represent your chapter and build your chapter's network.
  - Encourage your members to attend these events with you, and hold debrief meetings for reflection.





## EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

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The UN operates on a world stage that is ever-changing. Continue to be a globally-aware UN advocate by seeking out new information and research.

By regularly educating yourself and others, you are contributing to a more informed and prepared community of people who stand for the UN and promote positive change.





# EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

## Change the Narrative

- Some community members may not have a clear understanding of what the UN is and what the UNA does. Sustain your efforts to shift the dialogue to explain why UN advocacy is important.

Reference the [Better World Campaign Briefing Book](#) for facts on why supporting the UN is beneficial for the US. Reference BWC's [additional resources](#) for more information.

- Continue to stress how advocating for people in other countries does not mean prioritizing their lives over your own.
- Identify other chapter leaders or members who are passionate about the UN and international affairs. Equip them with UN advocacy knowledge and skills so they can contribute to community education.

Visit UNA-USA's [Advocacy Resources page](#) for written resources and advocacy training webinars.

## Research Community Engagement

- Identify local organizations and other groups that successfully engage the community (such as a rotary club, cultural society, a church, etc.).
  - Try to learn and study their methods of engagement. Consider partnering with them to boost your chapter's credibility and presence.

# EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

## Educate Yourself and Others

- Stay in the loop on UN topics or SDGs, as well as their applications in your local community.
- In addition, consistently relay select international news to keep your members aware of the global context of the UN.
  - Consider creating a monthly newsletter (email or printed) that compiles key headlines which you can disseminate to community members.

If you are unsure where to start, visit [UNA Forum](#) for regular global news updates from the Better World Campaign.





## CONCLUSION

Above all, as a chapter leader, you know your members, your chapter, and your community best. We know you work extremely hard to uplift community voices and provide a platform for individuals to speak on matters they are passionate about.

The UNA-USA National Office would like to thank you and your chapter for your commitment and perseverance in continuing the UN advocacy agenda within your community. Without your chapter, UNA-USA would not be the nationwide community it is today.