



UNA★USA

Guide to Engaging Senior Populations



Introduction

This guide is designed to inform you on core values and best practices to recruiting and engaging older persons in your UNA Chapter. As a Community Chapter, and even as a Campus Chapter, it is important to create an inclusive and accessible environment for any individual who wants to take a stand for the United Nations.

Overview

1. Why it's Important to Include Older Persons
2. Core Values to Prioritize when Engaging Older Persons
3. Strategies for Recruitment and Engagement of Senior Members
4. Strategies for Recruitment and Management of Senior Leaders
5. Conclusion

Why it's Important to Include Older Persons



There is no age requirement nor age limit to UN advocacy.

UNA-USA aims to be a diverse and inclusive community open to all individuals who are united by the common passion to advocate for the UN. This is an important goal to prioritize when approaching membership recruitment.

When it comes to UN and SDG advocacy, there are as many passionate senior activists as there are zealous youth activists. Though recruiting older persons may require a separate or altered recruitment strategy, it is important to make the effort to engage your full community in grassroots advocacy.

The next important focus is membership engagement. Without active and involved members, chapter meetings and events are ineffective. Depending on the proportion of older persons in your chapter membership, engagement strategies will differ.

If your chapter has a smaller proportion of senior members, develop a specific engagement plan for seniors, but be sure to balance it with your broader engagement plan.

If your chapter has a larger proportion of senior members, focus your efforts on retaining their membership.

Core Values



To prioritize when engaging older persons

If you ensure these values are prominent through your chapter's relationship with senior members, your senior members will be more committed to your chapter and your chapter's advocacy efforts. These are also incentives you can broadcast when recruiting members.

Trust

The core step to building trust with potential and current senior members is to be transparent. Communicate openly with senior members about why UN advocacy is important, what your mission is as a UNA chapter, and what UNA membership entails. If you are considering a senior member for a leadership position, be sure to communicate what their responsibilities would be as a Chapter Leader or Board Member.

Relationships

Trust and open communication with your senior members will pave the way to a strong relationship. Make sure to sustain the relationship by emphasizing personal and face-to-face interaction, even if that interaction must be virtual. Plan periodic chapter-bonding activities, like luncheons or coffee chats, where members can build friendships with each other. Recruit the family and relatives of senior members to also become members. This will give senior members more motivation to be active in your chapter.

Core Values



To prioritize when engaging older persons

Optimism

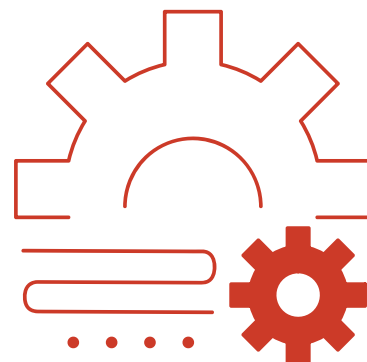
When conveying the importance of community advocacy for the UN, highlight the opportunity to promote positive change. Often, when educating the community on the global issues addressed by the UN, members may leave with a pessimistic and frustrated attitude as they realize how much more progress needs to be achieved. In response, explain how senior members' involvement and advocacy is one of the many solutions to this reality. By calling upon their representatives, taking a public voice to support the UN, and supporting youth education of the UN, senior members can have a direct role in creating a better future for coming generations.

Community

It is crucial to cultivate genuine community in your chapter. Members should not only be active in advocacy, but also active in their relationships with each other and the rest of the community. Advocacy and community education efforts have a greater impact when they are performed intentionally by a unified group of people. Build community through frequent meetings and open discussions, and consistently connect conversations about global issues back to your local community.

Key Strategies

For membership recruitment and engagement



Keeping in mind the 4 core values to engaging older persons (trust, relationships, optimism, community), utilize the following detailed strategies and actions to effectively recruit and actively engage seniors in your community.

Uphold Accessibility

Host meetings and events that accommodate older persons' schedules. If your community is primarily made up of older persons, plan the majority of your events around their schedules. Many older persons and retired individuals prefer chapter events to be held during the mornings or daytime, rather than after work hours.

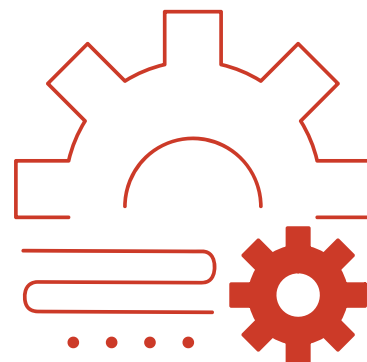
If your community has a mix of older persons and younger persons, plan some events around their schedules, but remember to be accommodating to your other members. In addition, host meetings and events (if they are in-person) that are physically accessible to senior members.

If many of your members live in a senior community, hold a meeting at the senior living community center. Alternatively, organize a carpool system and recruit other members to pick up senior members on their way to a meeting.

Provide meeting, activity, and event recaps to senior members who were not able to attend, to ensure they feel included and stay informed. This can be as simple as sharing meeting notes or an agenda.

Key Strategies

For membership recruitment and engagement



Perform Active Outreach

Research and collaborate with local community groups, especially those with prominent senior populations. If your chapter is not already located within a senior community, recruit actively in local senior communities with presentations about what UNA is and why UN advocacy is important. Provide seniors an on-demand advocacy opportunity, like signing a petition at the end of the meeting. They will immediately feel engaged and may be more inclined to join your chapter as a regular member. In addition, outreach at local community organizations or societies to recruit members who already play an active role in your community.

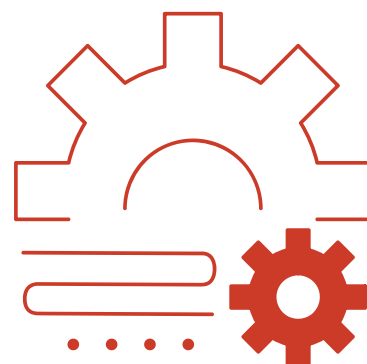
Campus Chapters

Though Campus Chapters' primary member targets should be students, consider engaging older persons during special events or activities. Invite older persons as guest speakers to vary the perspectives you share with your chapter.

Plan an inter-chapter event with a nearby Community Chapter to engage with adult or senior members. Host a presentation about UNA or a UN topic at a nearby senior center to share your interest in advocacy and promote community education.

Key Strategies

For membership recruitment and engagement



Tailor Communications

Look into your senior members' preferred methods of communication to build a recruitment plan for older persons. Face-to-face recruitment and printed communications often appeal more to senior members. If virtual communications are the only option, opt for phone or email communications, and make sure email communications are personal.

Reference UNA-USA's upcoming technology trainings to learn best practices for using Zoom and other platforms. Practice this knowledge when helping senior members attend virtual meetings. Seek further assistance from nearby Campus Chapter Leaders and/or Campus Fellows.

Remember, distanced events do not have to be live, broadcasted virtual events. Consider organizing a read-a-thon on a book relating to a Sustainable Development Goal. Senior members and regular members will continue to be engaged and will stay informed on UN topics.

Key Strategies

For leadership recruitment and management



Senior members turned chapter leaders may be more difficult to find if you haven't targeted seniors in member outreach, but their unique experiences and perspectives offer a great value as a chapter leader.

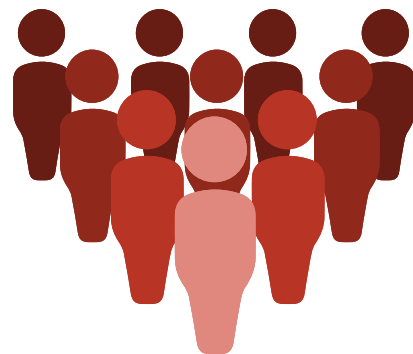
Train and Curate

Identify senior members who are passionate and especially interested in chapter activities to become your next chapter leader. Share your experiences and perspective as a chapter leader with these members, and show them why you enjoy being a chapter leader to cultivate their interest. Introduce them to your planning and operations processes so they can become familiar with the chapter leader perspective to UNA-USA.

Show Appreciation

Plan meetings to introduce newly recruited senior leaders to other chapter leaders or members. Introducing a senior leader to a younger leader or member will allow the senior to pass on their knowledge and experiences. The younger leader or member will learn from them, while the senior leader will be inspired and motivated by the younger individuals' passion and interest. In addition, senior members will feel more valued and respected by the rest of the chapter and/or chapter board.

Key Strategies



For leadership recruitment and management

Reduce Stressors

Create a low-stress environment for senior leaders so they feel more comfortable as a chapter leader. Fully explain their responsibilities and regular tasks of chapter leaders, and lay out clear step-by-step processes of their duties. Though this may take more preparation, it will help your senior leaders become more independent in the long run.

Beyond the traditional roles of president, treasurer, and secretary, consider creating new roles for senior leaders to distribute the workload. This will keep their roles focused and specific, and allow more seniors to get involved if they are interested. For example, employ long term additional positions like Advocacy Lead, as well as short term roles like a UN Day Event Coordinator.

Learn from Them

Seniors can have decades of professional experience, knowledge of issues, and even historical knowledge about your community. Learn from them! Think about what you can learn from their background, how you can use that to improve the work you do today, and how you can take their involvement to think about what really matters to seniors when you are engaging them to become members. Make sure to hear their story, get to know their skills and experiences, and together use that to help elevate the chapter's work.



Conclusion

Elaborate virtual events, community-wide activities, and formal partnerships are important, yet complex, elements of chapter operations and advocacy. As you approach recruitment and engagement of older persons, the primary focus is simply to keep members involved and educated on the UN. Advocacy has a wide spectrum and can range from events as extensive as the Week of Action Campaign to actions as quick as signing a petition. If you identify advocacy and education efforts that are relevant and accessible to your members, your chapter is fulfilling its role to stand for the UN. Remember, there is no standard way to operate your chapter and there is no age restriction to UN advocacy.

Sources

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