



# Membership Team Playbook 2023



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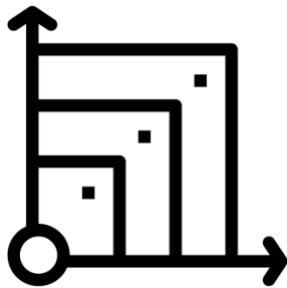
**AAUW Mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.**



**AAUW Vision: Equity for all.**

**Values: Nonpartisan. Fact-based. Principled. Inclusive and Intersectional.**

## Introduction



The intention of this guide is to provide tips to improve member recruitment and retention in branches of all sizes. Whether your branch is small, medium, or large, we hope you will find the information in this document to be relevant and scalable to your organization.

At a minimum, AAUW requires two branch leadership positions: a designated President/Administrator and a Finance Officer/Treasurer. AAUW of Michigan strongly recommends that each branch have an elected or appointed position that acts as a membership coordinator. We will call this position Vice President for Membership (Membership VP) for the purposes of this document, but your branch might use a different title.

Member recruitment and retention are activities that require the collaboration and participation of all members, not just the Membership VP. All members of a branch need to act as a membership team if the branch is going to grow and sustain itself. In a larger branch, the Membership VP might head a Membership Committee. In a smaller branch, the board might act as a quasi-Membership Committee and serve as a sounding board for the Membership VP.

Some branches have found that having co-officers works well to share the workload of a particular position and to ease newer members into leadership by partnering them with a more experienced member to collaborate in the shared position. Co-Membership VPs work as a team of two with their larger planning groups.

Everything a branch does is important in attracting new members and keeping them engaged. This includes a branch's print and digital communications, programming, presence at community events, public policy advocacy efforts, and fundraising and philanthropic projects. The Membership VP should promote a philosophy and understanding of member recruitment and retention that infuses all the branch's planning and activities.

## Branch Membership VP Job Description

Your branch bylaws may include a few sentences outlining the duties of the Membership VP position including length of term and term limits. If two members offer to share the responsibilities of the position, your bylaws may need to be revised to authorize co-VPs. Some branches stagger the terms of co-VPs so that one co-VP has at least a year of experience in the position when the second co-VP comes on board. Again, your bylaws should explicitly authorize such an arrangement.

Your branch's Membership VP job description should be consistent with any information about the position found in your bylaws. Branch officers are volunteers, so make sure your branch job descriptions are brief and to the point. You don't want to intimidate potential volunteers with a lengthy job description befitting a full-time position. Resist the temptation to include every task with instructions on how to perform it in the job description. Ideally, specific tasks and instructions for performing those tasks should be compiled in a separate procedures document.

### Template for a Branch Membership VP Position Description

This sample job description describes primary position duties common to most branch Membership VPs. In larger branches, the Membership VP might have additional responsibilities such as preparing an annual budget for membership activities, serving as chair of a membership committee, and assignments on other committees. The Membership VP might be responsible for developing membership brochures and application forms, submitting membership articles to a branch newsletter, and creating a membership directory. In other branches, some of these duties might be accomplished in collaboration with a branch communications officer. Feel free to adapt the template to fit the needs of your branch.

#### Summary of Position:

The Membership VP coordinates member recruitment and retention efforts.

#### Position Duties:

1. Develop a member recruitment and retention strategy for the branch.
2. Provide membership information to prospective members.
3. Collect membership applications and dues from new members in collaboration with the Branch Finance VP/Treasurer.
4. Develop an orientation process for new members.
5. Encourage members to renew before membership terms end and contact lapsed members to encourage them to rejoin.
6. Assist members in updating profile information in AAUW's Community Hub.
7. Attend meetings of the branch Board.

8. Receive membership-related information from AAUW and AAUW of Michigan and share as appropriate with other branch members.

Remember that the Membership VP is the leader and facilitator of these tasks, but other members of the branch need to support the Membership VP's efforts and collaborate as a team to be successful.

## Managing Your Branch Membership Roster in the Community Hub

There are three positions that are authorized to add, delete, and edit individual member records in the Community Hub, the membership portal on the AAUW website: the President/Administrator, the Finance VP/Treasurer, and the Membership VP. Individual members can process their own membership renewals and edit their individual profile records; however, in many branches the bulk of membership renewals and new member applications are processed by either the Finance VP/Treasurer or the Membership VP. New Membership VPs will need to find out how this division of labor is handled in their branch. Whichever position processes membership information in the Community Hub, the person in that position will need to communicate regularly with their colleague to share information about changes in the membership roster and income from dues.

The AAUW website has a [Community Hub FAQ](#) and a [Community Hub: Tools & Resources](#) page with written instructions and video tutorials explaining how to manage your member roster. If you need additional help, you can contact either the AAUWMI Membership VP or the AAUWMI Treasurer for assistance.

AAUWMI highly recommends that you periodically download your membership roster from the Hub and double check that every member's information is correct. It is particularly important that members have current email addresses in the Hub since email is how AAUW and AAUWMI communicate to their members. Members who have wrong email addresses in the Hub will miss out on important information from both AAUW and AAUWMI. If members of your branch change jobs or retire, check to see if they were receiving AAUW and AAUWMI emails at their old work address. Unless they have the option to retain their old email account, they will need to update the address in the Hub to receive future communications from the national and state organizations.

If members of your branch state that they are not receiving emails from AAUW or AAUWMI and their email addresses are correct in the Community Hub, it is likely that they have inadvertently unsubscribed themselves from AAUW or AAUWMI emails. To resubscribe to AAUW emails, see this [page](#); to resubscribe to AAUWMI emails, see this [page](#).

## Categories of Membership

Here is everything you need to know about qualifications for AAUW membership and various categories of membership in the Community Hub with a brief description of each.

### **Requirement for Membership**

Any individual with an Associate degree (or equivalent, such as a R.N.), Bachelor's degree or higher degree from a higher education institution or other qualified educational institution is eligible for membership.

### **Branch Member**

A member who joins a branch also joins the state AAUW affiliate (AAUW of Michigan in our state) and the national organization; an individual cannot become a member of a branch without also joining the state and national level organizations.

### **Dual Member**

This is a member who belongs to more than one branch. If the dual memberships are within the same state, the individual pays national, state, and branch dues to the primary branch and branch dues only to any additional branches.

If the dual membership is in a second state, the member pays national dues with the primary branch and branch and state dues in both branches.

### **National Member**

This is an individual who has membership in the national organization only. National members used to be called Members at Large or MALs. (You might see these terms in older AAUW documentation.) If you receive information of National Members in your area, try to recruit them to join your branch. National members who join a branch will need to pay additional branch and state level dues.

### **Paid Life Member** (MBL-Member Branch Life in the Community Hub)

A Paid Life Member is an individual who has paid a "life membership fee" to the national level.

### **Honorary Life Member** (MBHL-Member Branch Honorary Life in the Community Hub)

An Honorary Life Member is an individual who has paid national level dues for 50 years is thereafter exempt from national and AAUWMI dues. This category of membership must be applied for through the national level membership department. Download the MBHL

application form [here](#). Local branches determine whether branch dues are collected from these members.

## Student Affiliate

Student Affiliate members are undergraduates who have not yet earned an Associate degree or higher. Once a student attains a degree (or equivalent, such as a R.N.), they are then eligible for membership and can no longer hold Student Affiliate status.

## College/University (C/U) Partners

Presidents of colleges and universities with an institutional membership to AAUW can select two individuals from the institution to serve as C/U representatives. These individuals are granted both AAUW and AAUWMI membership for serving in this role, but they do not have membership in a branch unless they elect to join and pay branch dues. Branches near college/university partner institutions should reach out to collaborate and share information with the C/U institutional representatives and suggest joining the local branch if the C/U representatives are not already branch members.

## Membership Dues

Traditional annual year dues (July 1-June 30) are collected starting April 1. Membership dues of new members who did not join on the traditional membership year cycle will have renewal dates based on their date of joining AAUW. New members that join on the 1st-14th of the month will have a renewal date at the end of the previous month. New members that join on the 15<sup>th</sup> through the end of the month will have a renewal date of the last day of the same month. For example, if a new member joins during January 1-14, their renewal date will be December 31. If a new member joins on January 15-January 31, their renewal date will be January 31.

AAUW will send renewal reminders to members unless your branch requests to opt out of this service through the Community Hub. Current (April 2023) annual national dues are \$72 (\$69 is tax deductible); AAUWMI dues are \$12; branch dues vary.

The current (April 2023) one-time payment to become a Paid Life Member is \$1,340, and the payment is fully tax-deductible. ([Check for updated fee amount.](#)) These members pay only branch and state dues after becoming a paid life member. The Community Hub will note your members with paid life member status.

The [Shape the Future](#) membership campaign is a tool that branches can use to recruit and retain members. If a new or “lapsed” member (defined as someone who has not been a member for two years) joins at an event where the public is welcome, they pay half the AAUW National Dues, and the Branch is entitled to one free member for each two new members with a limit of three free members per year.

## Key Calendar Dates

Remember that membership recruitment is every member's job and should happen all year long and not just during specified dates on the calendar. Note that this sample calendar might not match your branch's membership recruitment cycle, so feel free to adapt to meet the needs of your branch. Some branches focus their primary recruitment efforts in late spring/early summer to align with the traditional membership year of July 1-June 30. Other branches go into semi-hiatus during the summer months and hold their major recruitment activities in the late summer/early fall when their programs resume. Other branches hold regular recruitment activities throughout the year.



### Spring

- New Membership VPs should meet with the outgoing Membership VP to learn past practice within the branch.
- Remind members who joined on the traditional fiscal year schedule (July 1-June 30) to renew membership by July 1. If a member with a June 30 renewal date renews any time between April 1 and September 30, their renewal date will remain as June 30. Newer members who did not join on the traditional schedule will need to be tracked throughout the year to make sure their membership doesn't lapse.

### Summer

- Contact members with lapsed memberships to remind them to renew. Many of these members will have just forgotten or not gotten around to renewing yet. If there are lapsed members who were not very engaged and missed a lot of branch meetings and events during the past year, ask them how they are doing and let them know they were missed as part of your conversation about their membership status.
- Start developing recruitment ideas and planning for events for the rest of the fiscal year. Collaborate with your planning team, whether that is a membership committee or your branch board.

### Fall

- Solicit the help of current members to contact new members and help integrate them into the branch. Some branches assign mentors to new members. Plan and hold orientation meetings for new members. Invite branch officers and other current members to participate.

### Winter

- Follow up with new members to see if they have questions, suggestions, or observations to share.



## Recruitment Tactics

Note that most of these tactics require collaboration with members of your board and other branch members. No branch needs to incorporate all of these suggested tactics, but each branch probably needs a multi-pronged approach to its overall recruitment strategy.

- Be intentional in determining your target audience and developing strategies to reach potential new members. Consider the demographics of your community with a view to diversity. Many branches composed of older members want to attract younger members. Reaching out to newly retired women might be a first step towards lowering the average age of your branch members. These women often have newfound time to fill, and they are looking for something meaningful to do with their time and energy.
- Assess the recruitment strategies you have used in the past to determine if they are still effective. For example, if your branch has traditionally directed most of its outreach to new women employees at a local college or university and that institution is now hiring fewer people due to enrollment declines, your branch probably needs to adopt a new recruitment strategy.
- Promote AAUW's mission *to advance equity for women and girls* in your recruitment efforts. Many people are looking for opportunities to make a difference and to join organizations that advocate for the issues that AAUW supports and represents.

- Prepare an “elevator speech” that any branch member can share when they have a chance conversation with a potential new member. An elevator speech is a method of introducing yourself, getting across a key point or two, and making a connection with

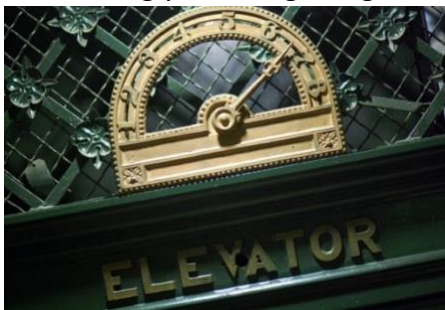


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<<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stevensnodgrass/4017403148>>

someone in a brief amount of time. A frequently cited standard is 118 seconds – the length of an average elevator ride in New York City.

The basic template for your elevator speech should include your personal introduction and a succinct description of the mission and impact of AAUW and your branch. To wrap it all up, end with a very specific ask such as an invitation to your branch's next meeting.

See a [sample elevator speech](#).

- Consider and develop appropriate media for recruiting each target audience. You don't need to use all these ideas, but you probably shouldn't rely on just one medium.

- Printed membership brochures and bookmarks can be distributed at key locations and events. (See [sample brochures and other printed promotional items.](#))

- Print up branch “business cards” with the AAUW mission, the AAUW website, and your branch’s website, social media links, and contact information. All members can distribute these cards any time they are asked about AAUW.



- Branch websites and social media can be excellent recruitment tools if they are kept current. If your branch isn’t googleable, you might appear to be non-existent, especially to newcomers researching a new community; however, if your branch’s website is out-of-date, and your social media pages have had no new posts in over a year, you might be communicating to potential new members that your branch is no longer active. This is not the message you want to send.

AAUW provides free hosting of branch websites using the WordPress content management system. If no one in your branch feels comfortable administering a website, AAUW will manage the site for you for a nominal fee. Check out [Site Resources](#) to find out how to request a website shell for your branch.

- Collaborate with the person(s) responsible for your branch communications to ensure messaging and branding is consistent in all your print and digital publications.
- Branches with “interest groups” (subgroups who get together due to a common interest such as to play bridge, discuss books, watch movies, etc.) sometimes attract new members whose first engagement is through the interest group. If your branch has interest groups, be sure that participants of those groups are aware of your branch’s mission-based activities and the overall mission of AAUW.
- Consider whether your meeting times and places are convenient to potential new members. Two-hour lunch meetings at a pricy restaurant might discourage working people with limited time for lunch and those on a budget. Parents of young children might have limited availability in the evening or need childcare to attend meetings.

- Use social media platforms to promote your branch’s activities and invite potential new members to attend your events.
  - Alert your branch members when new programs and events are announced on your social media platforms, and encourage them to react to your posts, make comments, and share posts on their own pages to improve the chances that the platforms algorithms will display the post in other people’s feeds.
  - Different platforms attract different target audiences, so consider using more than one platform to extend your social media reach. For example, Facebook users trend a little older and Instagram users a bit younger, and LinkedIn targets a professional audience.
  - If your branch has a Facebook page, look to see if there are local Facebook groups where it would be appropriate to share your events and expand your reach beyond your own page. Your Facebook administrator or someone else in the branch will need to join these Facebook groups to share events to them.
  
- Encourage members to invite friends and acquaintances to attend branch programs and events.
  
- Consider joining the local Chamber of Commerce. Ask to advertise your programs and events in the Chamber e-newsletter and online community calendar. Offer to host a Chamber event or meeting that would provide the opportunity to distribute branch information materials and recruit other Chamber members to your branch.
  
- Look for other community organizations (e.g., League of Women Voters) that would be willing to cross-advertise programs and events. If another organization agrees to promote your branch events, your branch should be willing to share information about the other organization’s events as well. If branch members belong to other community organizations, ask them to promote branch events to those groups.
  
- Look for online community calendars where you can advertise programs and events for free. Local radio and TV stations often have such calendars.
  
- Send press releases about your programs and events to your local newspaper. Try to establish a relationship with a reporter or editor of the paper so you can direct press releases to them directly and increase the probability that your information will be printed. If the newspaper publishes an article about your branch, be sure to share the link to the online article on social media and post it on your website.

- Set up an AAUW information table at local rallies, marches, Get Out the Vote, and community events. Distribute branch brochures and information about your upcoming events and take names and contact information of those interested in learning more about your branch. Ask how prospective members would prefer to be contacted.

Younger people tend to prefer texts and emails rather than phone calls, and many people don't answer their phones when they don't recognize the phone number of the incoming call. After receiving contact information, be sure to follow up with a phone call (leave a voicemail message if no one answers), text, or email message inviting them to future meetings and programs.



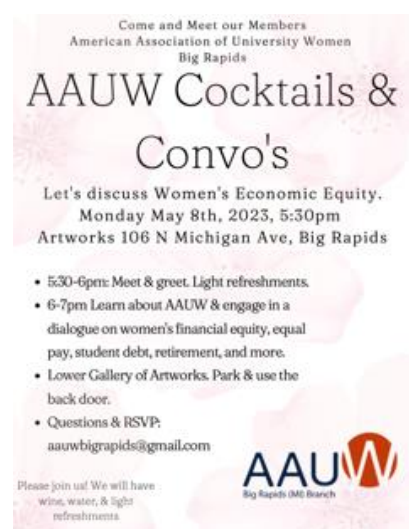
- You might want to create a file of potential new members and maintain notes about contacts with the individuals on the list. Ask current members for names and contact information of potential new members to add to your list, but also encourage current members to invite friends and acquaintances to branch events since their personal invitation is more likely to result in an acceptance.
- Work with your branch's Program VP to hold a recruitment event to introduce prospective new members to AAUW and its mission. Some branches hold such events in



a member's home, but a community meeting room can also serve as a venue. Some branches mail handwritten cards inviting friends and acquaintances to these events believing that the recipients appreciate the extra effort and personal touch.

Serve light hors d'oeuvres and beverages for your guests. Name tags are recommended for everyone. Provide attendees with take home materials such as a branch brochure and membership form.

Read about a branch's successful "[Cocktails and Convos](#)" series to recruit new members and engage current and prospective members in discussion about AAUW's mission related to education, leadership, and economic security.



## Orientation of New Members

Each branch should have an orientation for new members. The orientation meeting should be fun and relaxed. Orientation can be held in person or virtually. If you have an in-person meeting, name tags are a good idea, as are munchies. Assigned seats using name cards are also suggested so that no one feels left out. Invite other branch members to participate in the orientation. The orientation should introduce new members to the mission and impact of the national organization, the state affiliate, and your branch. See a sample [orientation meeting agenda](#).

You might want to establish a mentor program to help orient your new members. A good mentor/mentee relationship provides benefits for both parties. The mentor helps the new member to feel that they fit in and belong to the branch, and the mentee can provide useful insights about the branch's current procedures and activities and ideas for new initiatives and programs. Mentors who invites mentees to their home send a message that the new members are truly welcome to the group.

Once you have recruited new members to join your branch, look for ways to get them actively engaged. Provide new members with opportunities to volunteer for branch projects and activities. You might want to develop a profile form asking new members about their interests and skills. Do they have special skills such as graphic design or social media savvy that your branch can use? Do they have passions or interests that might match with unfilled appointed positions in your branch? For instance, many Michigan branches lack DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) and public policy officers. If you have new members who are interested in DEI or public policy advocacy, they might be interested in serving in these positions.

## Retention

Maintaining member engagement is key to member retention. These are a few ideas to help establish and maintain engagement.

- Starting meetings with an icebreaker question or other inclusion activity can help members continue to learn more about each other. There are lots of examples on the internet. This sample [orientation meeting agenda](#) also has several examples of questions that might be used.
- Some branches have “Spirit” activities to promote community and provide an element of fun to their meetings. Examples include asking members to wear apparel featuring their alma mater or AAUW logo.



- Observe your members’ milestone anniversaries as AAUW members. Members with 50+ years of membership are eligible for honorary lifetime membership, and their years of service to the organization should be appropriately recognized as a great achievement.
- If you have the technical ability to offer virtual options to attend your meetings, it will be easier for members to participate and maintain engagement with your branch when they can’t attend in person due to travel, childcare responsibilities, illness, etc. Some branches hold virtual meetings during the winter months so their “snowbirds” can stay engaged and to avoid potential cancellation of programs due to inclement weather.
- If you notice that a member has stopped attending branch meetings and events and hasn’t offered an explanation for their absences, the Membership VP or another branch member should contact the individual to inquire about their situation and let them know that they are missed.
- Establish a system to contact members with lapsed memberships to remind them to renew. If they indicate that they might not renew, take the opportunity to find out why since they might provide you with valuable information about how your branch might improve some aspect of its programming and operations.



## Membership is Everyone’s Business!



As stated previously, membership is not a job to tackle alone. The Membership VP should serve as the “Lead Cheerleader” for membership activities, but branch Membership VPs can’t effectively perform the jobs of member recruitment, orientation, and retention by themselves. Collaboration with other team members is essential. The Membership VP can lead these efforts successfully only with the full support of the branch team. Together design an approach that ripples out to involve every AAUW member in a fun, impactful, and rewarding adventure.