



➔ FACTSHEET 6

Membership models



Offering people the option of membership is a key way of developing your group, attracting new supporters and raising awareness of gynaecological cancers among the general public, politicians, the health service and other important organisations in your country.

Eligibility for membership

First, decide who will be able to become members of your advocacy group. The simplest answer is “everyone”, but you may prefer to limit your membership. For example, is your group only for women with gynaecological cancers and their families? Or do you want to also offer membership to health professionals? And do you want to extend membership to supporters from the pharmaceutical and other healthcare industries?

An alternative is to offer different types of membership. These categories might include:

- Family membership for women with gynaecological cancer and their families
- Individual membership for individual supporters
- Concessionary membership for young people in education, or retired and unemployed people
- Professional membership for health professionals
- Partner's membership for industry supporters.

Different levels or categories of membership not only mean that you can attract as many types of member as possible, but also enable you to offer a range of membership fees.

Email only membership

Some groups have decided to limit their membership to people who can supply an email address as part of their contact details. Using email addresses means that you can use simple and free software to update your membership database and circulate your newsletters. This ‘email only’ policy can help to reduce your costs, but may not be appropriate in countries where access to the internet may be limited.

Starting online

Membership fees—for example, as an annual payment or as a larger single payment for life membership—are important to cover the cost of recruiting and keeping your members. They can also be a source of regular income: for example, by offering annual ‘gold membership’ to more affluent people, or professional or industry partners.

In some countries, charities and NGOs can claim back extra money from membership fees paid by members who pay tax on their income. Check with your national tax authorities as you may need to make special arrangements in your country.

Ask people to renew their annual membership ahead of its expiry, and send at least two reminders if they do not get in touch. Enable online membership renewal and encourage your members to pay their fees through their bank by direct debit. Their membership will be renewed automatically, and it will save your group the costs of sending out reminders and processing cheques or credit card payments.

Recruiting new members

The methods you use to recruit new members depend on your group's resources:

- Always praise your hard working members and ask them to recruit a new member
- Encourage visitors to your website to become members. Tell them why they are important to your organisation and make it easy with clear signposting and simple forms
- Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to invite people to join your group
- Ensure that any publicity includes information on becoming a member of your organisation
- Advertise - for example, in publications likely to be read by prospective members. This is likely to be expensive, so make sure that you measure the success of this initiative to make sure it is worth while
- Get in touch directly with prospective members by co-operating with another organisation that shares your aims. But be aware of data protection laws in your country and that prospective members may object to receiving your unsolicited post or emails.

Retaining your members

When people join your organisation, send them a welcome letter, together with a welcome pack. The pack might include information about your group and its work that new members can use to recruit other supporters or to raise funds.

Some large, well-established organisations offer special benefits to their members: for example, the opportunity to attend meetings with celebrity supporters. However, membership benefits can be as simple and as low cost as regular communication.

A regular newsletter might include news about your group's activities, news about other members and requests for action (for example, writing to a government minister). It is also worth taking the opportunity to ask members to make regular donations outside their membership fee, and consider raising the possibility of legacies to further your group's work.

An email letter is the simplest way of communicating with your members, but bear in mind that some people may prefer a printed newsletter or may not have regular access to the Internet. Be considerate to your members: offer the option of paper communication (perhaps large print if appropriate), but explain that email will help to reduce your group's costs.

Whatsapp groups also became very popular on communications for members or governors.



The membership database

A well-maintained membership database is essential to help any advocacy group keep in contact with members and ensure that membership fees are collected efficiently.

At the start of your group, you are likely to have a simple list of your members' names, addresses and other contact details kept on someone's computer. But as your membership grows, you will need to establish a membership database using specific software. Before investing in a database program, get advice from someone with experience in membership management—use your regular newsletter to see if any of your members can help.

When you have established your database:

- Make sure that you follow data protection laws in your country. Ensure that you ask members' permission to contact them and give their details to third parties. Record their wishes on your database
- Agree written guidance to make sure that data entry is consistent. This will make sure that your database can be used for mail merges when contacting your members
- Keep your database up to date. Make sure that changes of address and membership renewals are entered regularly, and check for duplicate entries to avoid sending unnecessary mail (which is annoying for your members and is an unnecessary cost for your group)
- Back up your database regularly so that you have an up-to-date copy. You can print out a paper copy, set the database program to back-up regularly on to a hard drive separate from a desktop computer, and/or use cloud storage. But always make sure that your back-up is secure to protect your members' privacy and adhere to data protection laws.
- Good to know the education and knowledge of your members if you need help in several lines or if someone has special interests.

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