

MEMBERSHIP TOOLKIT – STARTING A NEW CLUB

IDENTIFY A CORE GROUP OF MEMBERS FOR A NEW CLUB

Form a statewide New Club Formation Team to identify and evaluate possible locations for new clubs and facilitate the establishment of clubs across the state. Using a state map, mark cities and towns that have a club with a blue circle and those that do not with a red circle. Consider these ideas when looking at the areas you have mapped out:

- Identify communities within 25 miles of an existing club, for ease in sponsoring and mentoring a new group.
- Ask current members if they have relatives and friends in other communities that would be interested in joining and/or forming a new club.
- Look for a growing suburban area, which could have a higher proportion of new residents.
- Determine a location for a GFWC Special Interest Club, such as a school, university, workplace, or retirement community.
- Identify clubs that were once affiliated with GFWC that might reconnect. Create an opportunity to share information about new GFWC programs and remind them of the benefits of belonging.

THE FIRST MEETING

The sponsoring club should help determine the location of the first club meeting. Look for an easy-to-find, neutral location, such as a library, community center, or museum. Avoid venues with religious and/or political connections. Choose a site that is appropriate for the expected number of attendees. A room that is too small will feel cramped, while one that is too large will make a great turnout seem paltry.

The first meeting is extremely important. Bring a variety of GFWC membership and promotional materials, such as brochures, program information, model bylaws, parliamentary briefs, and membership applications, plus some light refreshments. Make every effort to be organized, friendly, and cheerful. Many first-time attendees will be nervous, so greet everyone warmly and ensure they have a name tag. First impressions count!

Decide ahead of time who will chair the meeting—the State Membership Chairman, a State Federation Officer, someone from the sponsoring club, or an enthusiastic prospective member. Prepare an agenda to ensure all business is completed and provide a copy to each attendee. Appoint or elect a temporary secretary to take the minutes.

Keep it simple and be careful not to overwhelm attendees with too much information. Provide a few historical highlights of GFWC, give a brief introduction to the two Special Programs and five Community Service Programs, and stress the many benefits of belonging such as public service, personal growth and development, leadership opportunities, and valued friendships.

Keep presentations short and allow time for questions and comments. Look for attendees who seem especially excited and make them part of the conversation so their enthusiasm spreads.

As the meeting concludes, ask the group if they are interested in forming a club. If the answer is yes, have them complete a membership application (with contact information) and set a day and time for a second meeting to organize the club structure. Send attendees home with print information about GFWC.

Follow up with attendees by phone, email, or hand-written notes. Encourage them to bring a friend or two to the next meeting and remind them of the day, time, and location.

THE SECOND MEETING

Members of the New Club Formation Team and/or sponsoring club should attend the second meeting. Important business should include:

- Selecting a name. New clubs must include “GFWC” in their name. For example, GFWC (town name) Woman’s Club.
- Determining the club’s purpose and mission.
- Establishing the cost of annual dues. Dues should equal GFWC dues plus State Federation dues, plus District dues, plus an amount that will allow the club to run effectively.
- Deciding on officer positions. Traditionally, clubs have a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. If a club has less than 10 members a president and secretary will suffice. Also determine the term of office and how officers will be elected.
- Establishing a bylaws committee to review the GFWC model bylaws and then draft the club’s bylaws.
- Selecting a day, time, and location for the next meeting.

THE THIRD MEETING AND BEYOND

There is no set formula for how the club building process should evolve. A new club can take many months or up to a year to stand on its own. Perseverance is more important than speed. Members of the New Club Formation Team or sponsoring club should continue to attend meetings to keep the momentum moving in the right direction, gradually transferring leadership responsibilities to the new members.

The third meeting is a good time to begin considering projects. Encourage members to share ideas and information in a brainstorming session. Interaction among members will increase their sense of belonging and ownership of the club. If needed, larger groups can break into smaller discussion groups, so each person has an opportunity to provide input. Once choices are narrowed, members should vote on one or two ideas that they want to act on.

INSTALLATION OF NEW CLUB OFFICERS

When possible, the officers of new clubs should be installed with the assistance of the State President, District President, State Membership Chairman, and when called for, the State Director of Junior Clubs. This reinforces the club's connection to GFWC and lets new clubs and members know that they are important to GFWC.

Installations should be based on the duties of the officers as outlined in their club bylaws. Sample Induction Ceremonies can be found in the GFWC Ceremonies Guide, available from the GFWC Marketplace.

MAKING IT OFFICIAL—THE NEW CLUB APPLICATION AND CHARTER

The New Club Formation Team and/or the sponsoring club should guide the officers of the new club through the application process, which is established through the State Federation. At the next state meeting, present a Charter to the new club president and other attending members and celebrate this success.

CONNECTING AND NURTURING NEW CLUBS

Once a new club is formed, the State Federation should submit a New Club Form (available from www.GFWC.org) to GFWC as soon as possible. The GFWC Membership Services Department will enter the new club's information in the GFWC database, send a welcome letter and certificate, and activate subscriptions to *GFWC Clubwoman Magazine* and other publications.

It is important to orient new clubs to the benefits of belonging to GFWC during this period and continuing efforts should be made to help and guide the club through its first years of GFWC membership but not dominate its management. As a new club builds its own style based on the interests of its members, it is okay if the club model is modified, and other changes are made. With the tools to succeed, and the support of the State Federation and other clubs, the new club will begin to stand on its own and thrive.