



Lions Networks Overview Guide

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Lions Networks are great ways for members to connect and meet with Lions from across a district who have a shared interest. These networks are ways your district can give members a rewarding experience beyond what a single club can offer. Successful networks can also become recruiting tools for new members and help with retention of existing members. One of the primary reasons for Lions leaving is that they don't feel a sense of belonging. Creating networks where they can be with people with common interests will combat that.

Understanding Lions Networks

What a network is

A Lions Network is more than a district listing of people and their professions. It is a forum in which Lions from different clubs can come together to exchange ideas and serve in new ways. These networks bring people together from different communities who have a shared passion or background, creating new opportunities to connect and serve as a Lion.

What a network isn't

A Lions network isn't just a static district directory of Lions and their professions. Networks are about creating dynamic connections, and they require people to get together and meet.

A network is not a separate club or meant to distance members from their clubs. It's an enhancement to Lions membership. Joining a network gives Lions the opportunity to meet new people and serve in different ways. Clubs should view networks as a positive because joining a network will make a Lion more likely to remain in their club.

Here are some examples of how Lions can create networks.

Coalition

These networks provide a forum for Lions across a district to come together to solve complex issues, like substance abuse or youth mental health. This requires bringing in voices from different sectors of the community, including local school administration,

parents, business leaders, law enforcement, faith groups, health professionals and others. This group can then identify and address root causes of the problems in their communities, rather than just treating symptoms. Another example is building a network to advocate for increased government funding of anti-hunger programs rather than just hosting a food drive. The type of network is focused on systemic change.

Business/professional

These networks provide a place for Lions who are business professionals or entrepreneurs to meet in order to share opportunities and collaborate across industries. This network can create mentorship pathways, create business referrals and showcase stories of success while encouraging business leaders to keep their businesses involved in local service through their Lions clubs. Activities should be based around service, not just business referrals.

Cultural chamber

These networks bring together people with roots in one country but living in another. These networks may bring Lions from different clubs together to enjoy cultural preservation. Lions participating in these networks may encourage their clubs to create or participate in events such as cultural festivals. Members can partner with local organizations to promote their culture.

Affinity groups

These networks bring together people from different clubs with shared interests or lifestyles. For example, if your district has several members who are cyclists, the network could organize group rides, allowing the members to pursue their passions together. The cyclist network could also do service projects related to cycling, such as trail clean-ups or advocating for government funding for trail improvements.

These are just some examples of different ways you may be able to bring Lions together through networks in your district. There may be different needs for the Lions in your district, so the possibilities for networks are limitless. Networks are another great way for members to personalize their Lions experience.



Benefits of a Lions Network

Expanded capacity for service.

By including non-Lions and community leaders, networks can take on larger and more complex projects that a single club can. Addressing homelessness or drug addiction is difficult for a club, but teaming up with government agencies and other community organizations multiplies our impact. Ultimately, partnering with like-minded organizations amplifies our voices and enables us to serve even more people in new ways.

Opportunities to collaborate between clubs.

Networks build stronger relationships between members of different clubs. This allows for greater opportunities to collaborate on projects outside of the network. Lions will enjoy the feeling of belonging to a club and being part of something big.

Raise the profile of Lions in your district.

Larger projects that include community leaders from various fields tend to get more media coverage that can bring more attention to Lions clubs and the service we do. When we increase our visibility, we increase awareness and interest in Lions within our communities.

Make membership more appealing to more people.

Tackling larger issues can help attract people who otherwise might not join a local club. Network partners will be ideal targets for recruitment. Small business owners will see opportunities to network with each other and do business with like-minded people. Projects that serve children typically attract younger adults, which clubs often struggle to recruit.

Increased member satisfaction.

Networks provide more opportunities for Lions to follow their passions. They will see their efforts leading to more significant positive change, create new connections and feel an increased sense of belonging. All of this will lead to increased member retention.

Closer ties to community leaders.

Clubs often have to reach out to community leaders for funding and other support. Including them in network activities makes them more likely to support clubs in other ways.

Steps to start a network

1. Identify opportunities to form a network.

Survey Lions in your district to find out what matters to them. This could be a cause, an interest, or anything else that brings people together. Ask community leaders which needs remain unmet.

2. Appoint an organizer.

The network organizer is a Lion who has a passion for the network's focus and has the leadership skills to get it started. They will lead the recruitment of network members and lead the organizational meeting. Any Lion can serve as the organizer.

3. Bring people together.

The organizer meets with Lions and non-Lions to get them interested. This could include speaking at club and community meetings. They should have numerous contacts they can reach out to. District officers and club presidents should encourage Lions to get involved. As with all recruiting efforts, those who have joined the network should be encouraged to recruit people they know.

4. Host an organizational meeting.

The organizational meeting is where the network decides how it will be run. This meeting is presided over by the network organizer, who creates the agenda. The network needs to develop a charter similar to a club's constitution and by-laws. Elections need to be held for positions such as a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Other positions may be necessary depending on the nature of the network.

5. Publicize network activities.

Someone in the network should be responsible for promoting service projects to the public and encouraging non-Lions to join, and the network should have a strong presence on social media. All network members can help by talking to friends and family and promoting the network on their social media pages. Properly promoting service activities will encourage more people to get involved so more people can be served.



Running your network

Once you've identified your members and picked your area of interest, the next step is to consider the logistics of running your network. Developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) tailored to your network is essential for its long-term success. These SOPs should cover membership, meetings, governance, and referral tracking to help you manage your network efficiently and effectively. Consider the following as you plan your SOPs.

Membership

Eligibility – Membership is open to any Lion in good standing who shares an interest, activity or profession that aligns with the established network's charter and agrees to the Lions Network code of conduct.

Fee structure – Establish a fee structure to cover operational costs. This may include a one-time joining fee and nominal meeting fees.

Code of conduct – All members must adhere to a strict code of conduct that emphasizes professionalism, integrity and mutual respect in all business dealings.



Meetings

Frequency – Aim to meet at least twice a month to stay focused on your activities and facilitate regular networking opportunities.

Structure – Tailor your meeting structure to the type of network you have — network meetings are different than Lions club meetings.



Leadership and governance

Officer positions – Each Lions Network should have a core leadership team, typically consisting of a chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary/treasurer.

Leadership rotation – To encourage active participation and provide leadership opportunities for all members, officer roles should be rotated on a regular basis (e.g., every 6-12 months).

Governing body – An executive committee or governing body, composed of 7-15 members, should be responsible for managing the network's affairs, approving the budget and ensuring adherence to the SOPs.

Operational systems

To function efficiently, your network will need some basic operational systems.

Member database – A simple database to manage member information.

Attendance log – To track participation in meetings.

Onboarding checklist – A process to welcome and integrate new members.

Success tracker – A system to log and measure success, such as a referral tracking for a business network.

