

North America Membership Initiative



Pilot Lessons Learned

The nine NAMI Pilot districts provided the following best practices, practices to avoid, innovative ideas and thoughts for Lion leaders working to rejuvenate districts with new clubs, revitalize clubs with new members and re-motivate members with new fellowships and exciting service.

Process Best Practices

Build a Team

- To strengthen the bonds within your team, hold a team exercise, such as asking each member, "Why did you become a Lion?" or "What's most important to you about being a Lion?"
- Emphasize that goal setting, plan implementation, goal achievement and accountability are a team effort and a team commitment. It's not about a single person or a single year. Every Lion leader in the district should expect to actively help achieve the district goals.
- Ensure the team is committed to completing *Build a Vision* and *Build a Plan* before the Lion year starts.
- When building the team for next year, include the current year DG team, along with the GAT, zone and club leaders.
- Combine roles where there is a good fit. For example, your GST could lead the Member Satisfaction sub-team and your GLT could take the Leader Support sub-team, if that's what would work best for your district. All your GAT members should understand how they fit in your NAMI plan and their expected input.
- Activity teams should not have less than three Lions, so the team can be self-sufficient and problem solve.
- Identify the virtual meeting tool(s) you will use, which can be free accounts or a shared paid account. Hold a rehearsal to practice using it before your first meeting.
- End team meetings with Next Steps and Next Meetings. Provides the opportunity to review action items and establish the date for the next meeting.

Build a Vision

- Involve as many Lions in the SWOT analysis as you can. The diversity and wide scope of ideas are the foundation of success. Consider meeting at or immediately following your district convention, meeting virtually or hosting an in-person meeting and inviting every Lion leader or every Lion in the district.
- Ensure each participant is given the opportunity to voice their opinions and to share their ideas. This is where participants buy into the program, so they will help promote it throughout the district and recruit others to serve as well. Be aware of differences that could shape perceptions, like urban/suburban/rural or family/age/length of service circumstances.
- Use the data from the last 5-10 years of membership, service reported and leadership to inform your goals, including district and club-level data.



- Take advantage of this meeting to identify future district and club leaders, as well as team members for the plan actions.
- Don't set goals too high, be honest about what you and your district can do. Invite challenges to the goals: "If you think something is not realistic, speak up." If you achieve your goals, you can always do more. Ask your team to consider how it feels to exceed your goals vs. not achieving them.
- Make sure the NAMI goals align with the overall district goals, so everyone is working in the same direction.

Build a Plan

- Ensure participation from the entire DG team in plan development. Also engage club presidents and membership chairpersons. People are more likely to support a plan they contributed to.
- Start with your district analysis and goals as the foundation for your plan.
- Ensure all district leaders, including GAT and VDGs, have a role in executing the plan.
- When reviewing your plan actions, consider if there are more foundational steps that need to be completed first. For example, club meetings may need improvement before a membership drive or the knowledge of region/zone chairpersons may need to be increased before they can be the primary communication channel for clubs.
- When prioritizing activities, consider budget requirements. Get invited to your district budget meetings to make your NAMI requests. Activities that sound great, but are too costly may have to be put on a *Future Ideas* list, but first check for LCI and LCIF grants or if third-party grants are available.
- Don't spend too much time planning. Spend less time planning and more time doing.

Build Success

- Be prepared to start working from day one.
- Communicate a summary of what's been learned in your analysis, your district's goals and plan, so Lions understand why and how you are working on this initiative. Use the opportunity to solicit additional volunteers.
- Hold monthly NAMI conference calls to share the latest data, progress, successes and challenges. This also helps maintain accountability and commitment. Include the DG team and GAT team.
- Provide a monthly report that includes membership number and goals, what was accomplished this month and what will be accomplished next month.
- NAMI progress and challenges should be discussed in detail at every Zone, Cabinet and Council meeting. Ask what people are saying about NAMI to identify areas of concern and opportunity.
- Keep the team informed of developing situations, so they can be addressed quickly.
- Ensure clubs know they are vital to the process. Keep clubs engaged through frequent communication sessions so they know what to do, why it's beneficial to them, the resources available and where to go for questions (e.g. zone chairperson).



- Keep an eye on expenses and ensure reimbursement claims are entered quickly. Avoid a year-end surge that puts you over budget.
- If something doesn't work, reassess the situation. You may need to try something else and adjust the plan. And that's OK.
- Recognize exceptional contributors. Often.
- Speak individually with inactive or ineffective team members quickly. If needed, pair with a mentor. If that does not help, replace them.

Implementation Best Practices

New clubs

- Have more than one club extension site working simultaneously. If one doesn't develop, start a branch club or drop it and concentrate time and energy on more promising areas.
- If you can't identify towns for new clubs, consider specialty clubs, virtual clubs and campus clubs.
- The best recruiters for a club are those who could be members of that club. Find a couple of key leaders and position them as the club spokespersons.
- Campus clubs should include students, faculty and residents. This helps prevent the club from closing after students graduate.
- Meet with key local officials (fire/police chief, superintendent of schools, head librarian, chamber of commerce, etc.) prior to canvassing. Consider sharing aspects of your SWOT with them and solicit their advice / assistance.
- Utilize all available resources (LCI new club coordinators, help from other districts, marketing templates, etc.).
- Start advertising 3-4 weeks prior to canvassing, using all means available (radio, newspaper, Facebook, email, town activities webpage, etc.)
- Have Lions sign up in advance for the shifts to recruit charter members. Meet each canvassing morning to review progress and plan the day's activities, then meet each week until the club is chartered.
- Keep in touch with everyone that shows interest in the club through emails and phone calls to keep them informed on how the club is progressing. Start immediately after they show interest and before/after each informational or organizational meeting.
- Have representatives from organizations or individuals who have received service from a Lions Clubs speak at informational sessions about the benefits they received.

New members

- Develop a shared membership plan between the district and the clubs. Provide training on how to develop a written club membership plan. Written plans are more actionable and accountable.



- Work directly with club leaders on how to promote excitement for their service projects, hold meaningful club meetings, be open to change, and provide proactive club leadership. Clubs must have good meetings to attract new members.
- Provide membership ideas for clubs every month. For example, focus on a different professional group to invite or a group that receives a membership discount each month. Can be provided to zone chairs to share with their clubs, along with the “Just Ask” guide.
- Instead of asking people to become members, invite them to social activities and service projects, so they can experience first-hand the benefits of being a Lion.

Member satisfaction

- Provide ideas for new service projects, either monthly or by sharing the 100 Service Ideas, the Service Launchpad or Project Planners. Meaningful service keeps Lions engaged with their clubs.
- Support multi-club, district-wide or multiple district service projects. Larger projects connect more Lions and attract more publicity.
- Share the availability of resources, like the Club Quality Initiative, Membership Growth Event materials, the Service Launchpad and marketing templates, with clubs.
- Include social activities for members in your plan. These can be at the district, region, zone or club levels. Make them as publically visible as possible, so potential Lions can approach the event or participate.
- Recognize members and clubs that contribute to membership growth.
- Make personal phone calls to find out why losses are occurring and propose creative solutions. For example, when a branch club was found to not be a good fit with their host club, they were moved to a new host club.
- Provide timely communications to clubs with advice on how to avoid drops in December and June.

Leader support

- Ask members for the training/development topics they are interested in and use the responses to guide curriculum.
- Be creative with learning event titles, content and scheduling. For example, a *Lions Officer Summit* is more interesting than *Club Officer Training*, content can be hand-picked from ELLI, RLLI and ALLI curriculums and scheduling can be several shorter sessions, rather than one longer session.
- Provide communications, mentoring and leadership opportunities for upcoming Lion leaders within the clubs and the district.
- Ask tried and true PDGs to be the instructors.
- In district meetings, include service projects and training sessions. These build team cohesion.
- Provide region/zone chairperson and club officer training before the year begins. Recognize their roles in the success of Lions clubs.



- Make attendees feel important and appreciated at all training sessions. Show that we care about their success.
- Ensure training incorporates comradery and fun, along with leadership skills and Lionism.
- Provide annual Guiding Lion training, in person if possible. New clubs need to be mentored or they will be lost.
- Choose the combination of in-person training and webinars that will maximize learning and fellowship in your area.
- Establish an online library of training sessions for those who cannot attend scheduled events.
- With every training seminar, include a method for attendee evaluation. Not only does this help improve future sessions, but, when a summary is published, it also proves the value to others who may be interested.

Process Practices to Avoid

Build a Team

- Do not allow ideas to be disparaged at team meetings. Bring the team back to the district goals and ask how the idea could contribute to the goals. Add ideas that should be considered at another time to a *Future Ideas* list along with who suggested it.
- Don't burn out dedicated Lions. Pick a NAMI Champion that has no other responsibilities beyond membership or one who can find replacements for their other commitments.

Build a Vision

- Don't use a survey for your SWOT analysis. You need the active participation of a variety of Lions to obtain groundbreaking results.
- Do not set goals based on what you *want* to see. Base goals on past performance, plus changes that can be realistically achieved.

Build a Plan

- Do not think you should or can solve all problems or do everything you would like to in a single year. Use a *Future Ideas* list to store them for when the time is right. You may need them if your initial ideas fall through, if you move faster than expected or if you find additional volunteers to help.
- Large initiatives may take multiple years to implement and that's OK. You can identify what you will accomplish this year as Phase 1, etc.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Check the LCI resources to see what is available to help you.

Build Success

- Don't overwhelm people with long or complicated communications. Provide summaries or bulleted lists of what's most important or a series of communications rather than everything at once.



- When you set up communication channels, be sure to use them yourself and help others to do the same. Don't tell zone chairpersons, for example, that they are the contact for club leaders and then tell or allow club leaders to come to you.
- Do not establish NAMI Champions in clubs. Better to use existing leaders.
- Do not work in silos. Having the whole team meet regularly boosts morale and provides opportunities for cross-functional idea development.
- Do not micro-manage activity completion. Instead, make an extra effort to establish a mutual understanding of the outcome and let the Lions involved decide what needs to be done to make it happen.
- Do not expect to engage clubs with only emails. Emails do not build excitement or motivate clubs to become involved. Use personal visits, virtual meetings and phone calls to sell the benefits of participating in NAMI. All clubs must be encouraged to participate!
- Do not allow leader vacancies to linger. You cannot afford to let entire sections of your plan fall by the wayside from the loss of one person. Replacements must be made in a timely manner.
- Don't lose sight of your goals. Review your goals regularly, maintain open communications about your progress and adjust your plan when warranted.

Implementation Practices to Avoid

New clubs

- Don't start without a team committed to a plan, including the sponsoring club and Guiding Lions.
- Don't procrastinate! New clubs can take longer than you think. Preparations should begin before the year begins.
- Do not assume you can start new clubs with only online advertising. You will need one-to-one communication through person contacts, canvassing and/or events.
- Don't spend too much time and energy on clubs that aren't going to materialize.
- Do not accept the "Not In My Back Yard" argument against starting a specialty club in a traditional club area without challenging how the traditional club will support the needs of specialty club members.
- Do not have a new club LCI coordinator visit without doing the planning and community preparation prior to canvassing.
- Don't choose an informational or organization meeting location that is not conducive to presentations and group discussion.

New members

- Do not visit clubs or begin a club-based activity without planning for follow-up and accountability, so you can maximize the value for the time spent.
- Don't neglect New Member Orientation. New Lions benefit from knowing they are part of the district and the worldwide community of Lions.



- Do not skip publicly celebrating every service activity. When a community sees the support provided by a Lions Club, community members want to be part of that service and fellowship.
- Do not send generic emails or letters to dropped members, asking them if they would like to rejoin. To get results, use personal letters and phone calls.

Member satisfaction

- Do not accept that some clubs won't meet and won't serve due to COVID. Instead, provide the support and resources to help them. Lions' service includes caring for our members, who can have unmet physical, social, emotional and financial needs.
- Do not allow clubs to say they cannot afford to provide service. Brainstorm low-to-no-cost ideas with them.

Leader support

- Do not assume you know what types of training or other support Lions need. Ask them.

Process Innovations to Try

Build a Team

- If possible, personalize team and meeting invitations. For example, "Lion Sara, we need you!"
- Start your own Young Lions Task Force to support attracting and retaining young Lions.

Build a Vision

- Solicit input for your district analysis from non-Lions and other community organizations. An outsider's perspective could provide insights not visible to Lions.
- Conduct SWOT sessions (can be virtual) with each of your clubs.

Build a Plan

- Create COVID and post-COVID sections of your plan or otherwise identify those actions in your plan that can be implemented after COVID restrictions are removed.
- Add motivation, communication and accountability to each action in your plan with a SMART goal for that action.
- Include a recognition and awards action in your plan to keep energy and engagement high in the district.
- Develop a multi-year plan aligned with your NAMI plan.

Build Success

- Create a PowerPoint for leaders to present to clubs to engage them in NAMI. Focus on why they should care, what they need to know and the actions to take next.
- Choose an organizational tool to track your NAMI activities. It could be a document, spreadsheet or a project management tool, such as Asana.



- Every two weeks, send an email to your NAMI team with assigned tasks and report back dates, while stressing the importance of task completion and the overall NAMI initiative.
- Establish a documentation process, so goals/plans can be referenced the following year.

Implementation Innovations to Try

New clubs

- Use census data to review the population centers in your district. Which do not have a Lions club? Which are growing and could sustain another club? Use satellite map views to look for residential areas that could support a club. In Canada, use censusmapper.ca, and in the United States, use census.gov for demographic maps.
- When speaking with community leaders, share Lions commitment to diversity and ask if there could be interest in culture-based, LGBTQ+, or retirement community clubs. They may know of populations within the district and leading individuals within those communities.
- Start a Facebook Group for a new club you want to develop. Take a systematic approach to a series of posts, then run ads to get leads.
- During new club development, identify potential community needs and plan a service project with the new club. Or start by conducting a needs assessment with a group, like first responders, to identify a cause for a new club.
- Use learnings from club member satisfaction surveys to provide guidance to the new club.
- Start branch clubs in areas where existing clubs are not welcoming or a handful of people have a special interest. Or, start branch clubs to ensure stability before they stand alone as an independent club.
- Include communications to existing club leaders in your new club development plan, welcoming the new club, how it fits in the district and the opportunities to collaborate in service that a new club brings.

New members

- Expand your reach by hosting YouTube and/or Facebook Live events with before and after social media posts.
- Create club brochures or flyers and ask if they can be left in government buildings, libraries, and doctor/dentist offices.
- Bring in family members by charging a reduced rate of only district, state and LCI dues. Many family members already participate in service and social activities – they can be members without expectation of attending regular club meetings.
- Sponsor a club membership competition, a sponsoring member contest and/or a district-wide membership drive with the active involvement of region/zone chairpersons.
- Create a “best of” collection of service photos to share online for marketing to prospective members. Consider using an online tool to assemble these into a “flipbook”.



- Encourage members to talk about their Lions service with like-minded people on vacation. The prospective members could join another club or engage with their club through technology.
- Create recruitment kits for each region with a pop-up banner, table cloth and recruitment brochures.
- Print two-part recruiting cards. One part to give to perspective members and the second to record that person's contact information.
- Provide step-by-step instructions or a seminar on how to bring in new members, including crafting an elevator speech and overcoming objections.
- Create a district or club highlights video for marketing and member satisfaction. Feature everyday Lions, service projects and people helped. Members or their contacts with video skills may donate their services for humanitarian or promotional purposes or a local college may be willing to create a video as a student project.
- Create New Member Induction Kits for district officers to facilitate well-conducted, meaningful induction ceremonies.

Member satisfaction

- Develop suggestions for club accessibility and encourage your clubs to adopt them. We lose Lions every year to aging-related conditions that, with some basic accommodations, we could retain.
- Hold a district women's leadership and / or young Lions event.
- Hold a New Voices seminar or service project and include Lion and non-Lion speakers and invitees.
- Ask clubs to consider if they would like to be family friendly, and if so, how they should show it. For example, setting aside an area for kids with kid-friendly activities at club meetings.
- Recommend clubs establish a Fellowship Chairperson to be responsible for club social activities. These can be in-person and also virtual, such as a karaoke night.
- Make rededication ceremonies part of charter anniversary celebrations. Current members stand before the guests and rededicate themselves to Lions and their Club. This brings all current members into the celebration and reenergizes the membership.
- Assist troubled clubs by pairing them with a nearby club and / or bringing them together for custom training sessions. Consider naming this effort "Club Forward", to emphasize the positive direction for these clubs.
- Send "Miss You" cards to members who miss meetings and / or make personal phone calls to show we care. Find out if there anything that can be done to help them attend. We serve our community, we also need to serve our members.
- Encourage ELLI and ALLI graduates to become Guiding Lions and use their skills to improve challenged clubs.
- Identify a member satisfaction / conflict resolution specialist, a respected Lion who can listen to concerns and propose solutions.



Leader support

- Create checklists for club officers to help them understand and organize their duties each month of the year.
- Promote an e-Learning Week or Weekend, encouraging online learning through district and LCI webinars and taking Lions Learning Center courses.
- Establish a Regulatory Committee to help Lions Clubs understand relevant laws and regulations, comply with the requirements of their incorporation and mitigate risk to meet the requirements of their insurance policies.

Thoughts for Leaders

- A key responsibility of every Lion leader is the growth of our membership.
- Virtual meetings allow more Lions to meet more often, more conveniently, but we also need to maintain person-to-person Lions' fellowship.
- With time, consistent small changes wear away old ideas.
- If you think you are leading and no one is following, you are only taking a walk.
- NAMI is about trying new approaches and sometimes they fail. Learn your lessons, adjust the plan and move on.
- Lions leave because they don't feel they belong. They need to be heard, they need to feel they are accepted, appreciated and are contributing.
- We can't say, "We Serve," then only write cheques.
- We can't say, "Kindness Matters" and fail to practice it with our own Lions.
- We can't say, "New Voices" and then fail to listen, show respect or provide opportunities to lead.
- We cannot lose amazing Lions because of politics or personal agendas.
- TEAM: Together Everyone Accomplishes More.
- We must model good team behavior if we expect it from others.
- Prevention of member drops is much easier than recovery of lost members.
- Embrace the process. You can figure it out. You can make it happen.
- Plan. Do. Achieve!