

“Help Wanted” Workshop

The May 2023 virtual workshop for branch leaders was formatted as online breakout rooms for participants to share suggestions and successful practices to address this concern: HELP! WE CAN'T FIND LEADERS! OUR BRANCH MAY FAIL!

The suggestions were transcribed by a scribe in each room and shared with other participants in a recap session. They have been compiled below and arranged into general topics.

Please use and share this helpful document. For more information, contact branchsupport@aauw-ca.org.

CHANGE THE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE TO ATTRACT MORE VOLUNTEERS

- AAUW National only requires 2-3 positions: a facilitator/administrator, a financial officer and a secretary/recorder (required for incorporated branches).
 - Call it your Leadership Team (this sounds collaborative).
 - You may need to change your byLaws, but that is simple.
- Pare down requirements for the leaders.
- Make your list of who you think might join your new team; take them for coffee or lunch or a glass of wine – ASK IN PERSON – you will be harder to turn down.
- Share positions, rotate, have a committee, bring a friend (it's more fun to share) or offer a shorter time with responsibility.
- Hire a bookkeeper to assist your finance officer or divide the work: branch business and 2. membership business.
- Use “facilitator or administrator” not “president”; it's less scary.
- The Secretary/recorder: can be an entry-level job for new-ish members. There's a small time commitment and it's a great way to discover the branch and AAUW.ership jobs.
- Have a short, one-page job description, including time commitment, timelines, and contacts for people with history in the job.
- Connect new leaders with experienced ones. They shadow; you mentor.
- Include quotes from past leaders about the rewards of the job.
- Point them to AAUW's and AAUW California's online toolkits for each job!
- Reach out to your state board members

OFFER MORE TRAINING TO PROSPECTIVE LEADERS

-
- Have a **short**, one1-page job description, including time commitment, timelines, and contacts for people with history in the job.
- Connect new leaders with experienced ones. They shadow;, you mentor.
- Include quotes from past leaders about the rewards of the job.
- Point them to AAUW's and AAUW California-CA's online toolkits for each job!
- Reach out to your state board members for help.

“Help Wanted” Workshop

HAVE EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS:

- Invite all members. Invite new members to “come and learn what we do – no strings attached”
- Schedule board meetings when people can attend (i.e. not at 10 a.m. Monday if you want working members).
- For evening meetings, offer transportation for those averse to driving at night.
- Distribute minutes of previous meetings BEFORE the meeting day; give time to review. Only discuss what is on the agenda. Digression is distracting and discouraging.
- Keep meetings to 1 ½ hours, tops. Clearly schedule when there will be only social time (i.e. before or after the business section).
- Hold fewer meetings. Change your bylaws to reflect this new reality.

RE-INVIGORATE LONG-TIME (and tired) MEMBERS:

- These members might return to the leadership team when they understand its new format (slimmer) **and the stakes of disbandment.**
- Are they reluctant to tackle new technology?
 - Hold a party to train them on Zoom (keep it basic). See the webinar on Basic Zooming at aauw-ca.org/CA Business/Tech Tools
 - Offer at-home training with their computer
- Hold a Renewal Party to ease them into the process (and get them renewed).
- Remember, older members still give donations; besides, we like them.

TAKE ACTION WHEN YOUR BRANCH IS IN TROUBLE

- **Find the members who truly want the branch to continue.** Invite these engaged movers and groovers to a Blue-Ribbon Party. Evaluate the status of the branch: what you have to work with, what is lacking, brainstorm for ideas. **“What are YOU willing to do to save our branch?”** The synergy of the group will find solutions.
- SURVEY: Ask current members what is most important to them. Ask members to commit to helping in one small way each year.

“Help Wanted” Workshop

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS OF DISBANDING/MERGING

- When this is necessary, make sure your members know the situation is **dire**. Use apocalyptic language to get their attention.
 - What will happen if the branch closes? No more local scholarships, no more Tech Trek, no more community projects, no more interest groups. How do they feel about that?
- **When considering merging:**
 - With which branch? Do both agree?
 - Questions to consider: allocating joint board positions? Tech Trek coverage? What happens to the merging branch’s bank account? What new name? This should allude to both branches, if possible, and be geographically identifiable by National and people searching for a local branch.
 - BRANCH SUPPORT (branch@aauw-ca.org) must be notified about the name if you are considering either of these options.
 - Download the [Affiliate Disbandment Form](#).

ENGAGE THE MEMBERSHIP – WE WANT TO SPARK ENTHUSIASM!

- Use your Interest Groups! Do a Branch Buzz each month - what’s happening in branch news – and ask Interest Group leaders to share 2-3 items. Use these groups for invites, doing quick surveys, and finding leaders. This is your link to those who only attend Interest Groups, not general meetings. Ask each group to organize one branch program each year. In smaller in-person groups it is harder to say “no.”
- Ask long-time members to share what AAUW has meant to them, why they keep renewing. Run a few short quotes in your newsletter.
- Ask newer members why they joined. Quote those too. Engage them in a short, time-limited project, nothing long-term or difficult. Do NOT “burn them out.”
- **Use your branch history:** we all have community projects we are proud of. Newer members don’t know of them; the rest will feel proud.
- Include your Branch Charter Date everywhere: newsletter, website, social media, letterhead.....
- Include a “Did you know.....” section in every newsletter, then drop an interesting “tidbit” from the branch’s past.
- ALWAYS, always thank your team and others, even those who do a tiny job.

“Help Wanted” Workshop

RECRUIT FROM NEW SOURCES

- New retirees might be a good target.
- Try member drives, events, interest groups, friend to friend, local publicity, libraries Build visibility in the community. Consider local scholarship recipients, Tech Trek/Speech Trek/Gov Trek parents. Approach potential retirees in school and business break rooms (provide brochures, but ask for permission first). A plate of cookies next to the brochures? Add a sign: “AAUW does more than bake cookies; we improve the lives of women and girls.”
- Get to know your local government leaders, college and university staff. Invite them to speak at a meeting (good publicity for the branch and potential members).
- Table at local college: use your banners, brochures, be clear about what we can offer them: AAUW’s mission is also theirs – young people are interested in social justice, advocacy, and gender equity. So are we. We can mentor. Start Smart; Work Smart programs are attractive to young people.
- Take part in local events: march in a July 4th parade – hold up your banners proudly.
- Have membership applications at ALL meetings and events.
- Branch business cards: all branch members (all members too?) should have some to hand out in the grocery store etc. Include all contact information and QR code if possible. They are inexpensive if bought in large amounts.
- Attend meetings of organizations with a similar focus; offer to speak; ask them to speak to your members. Ask people attending events to join.
- Participate in women’s marches; table at Farmers’ Markets.
- **People may ask “What’s in it for me?” Have the answers ready.**

ENGAGE NEW MEMBERS:

- **Make them feel welcome and included.** Host an orientation – a tea, a party, an event, a special Wine and Whine etc. Provide “goody bags with AAUW swag etc.
- Ask “why did you join?” Offer how to best use their association with AAUW to their advantage and that of their community. Ask for their ideas. Impart “what AAUW is and does and why”
- Don’t let them stand alone at events.
- Personally contact each new member; offer transportation, ask what they are interested in. Have *Branch Ambassadors* to handle this.
- Alert your membership to watch for and engage new members. Invite them for coffee.
- Have identifiable NEW MEMBER nametags at events.

“Help Wanted” Workshop

RECONSIDER YOUR PROGRAMS:

- Discuss branch programs/schedule with your pared-down committee. What is feasible; what is not.
- Is there no one to organize a favorite project? Then IT DOES NOT GET DONE. People will notice. You may have to eliminate a few projects.
- Is the event too costly? How could it be done for less expense? Is it worth it?
- Remember the mission. We work for better education, gender equity, and to better the lives of women and girls. And that is worthy.
- Fun meetings are good. Mission-based meetings are good. Plan both.
- Offer something to interest most of your members.
- Offer Action Groups (climate change/DEI, social justice/helping the unhoused etc.). Younger members will be enticed by these.
- Continue Interest Groups (bridge/books/hiking etc.).
- Promote the benefits of Tech Trek, Speech Trek and the new GovTrek. Each engages a different demographic, will bring publicity, and can be a source of new members.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- If they can't find you, they can't join.
- Your website must be up to date with upcoming programs and contact information. Include photos of recent events. (Get parental permission before including pictures of minors.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Check out AAUW California's webinars, found at the very top of the home page: aauw-ca.org. You can watch the slide deck, quickly, or get more in-depth information from the video. Truly, they will help you and your team.
- Check, also at the top, under “Branch Tools.” You will find a complete education of how to function as an AAUW leader.
- And, always, email AskUsFirst@aauw-ca.org for any help, questions or support.

BY WORKING TOGETHER AND BY BEING CREATIVE, WE CAN REVIVE, REFRESH,
AND REINVIGORATE OUR BRANCHES FOR ANOTHER 140 YEARS.