



Membership Toolkit

October 2023

Welcome

Our long history can be recited by all of us in leadership roles. 1881 stands out as the beginning of an organization created by a few women who promoted women's college education. Over the years our thousands of members have given voice to issues that affect women including economic security, equal access to public education, social and racial justice, and increased representation of women in leadership.

This resource aims to provide tools for our branch leaders that will hopefully provide answers and links to the things that many have questions about. Our goal is to create something concise, practical, and useful.

I frequently return to the reasons I joined AAUW. After retirement I wanted purposeful intellectual stimulation, new friendships, and opportunities to serve. AAUW provided me with all of that and more. New members need that sense of belonging and purpose. For those of us charged with membership responsibilities, we need to make sure our branches are welcoming.

Thank you for taking on this responsibility. You are part of a dynamic team that will continue to transform lives.

Please do not hesitate to contact the state Membership Committee Contact for any questions you may have. Our committee wants to be available to you whenever you need help at membership@aauw-ca.org

Warmly,
Marsha Swails, Director
AAUW California
Branch Development Committee -
Membership Contact

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Part 1: Membership Roles in Your Branch

Branch Membership Contact

The membership contact, who may be the membership vice president or any member of the leadership team who has been designated for that role, should be the heart of the branch leadership team.

- The membership contact should be familiar with the membership job description located in the branch bylaws and policies and procedures.
- This person keeps an eye out for opportunities to expand membership and ensures that new members find a place within the branch activities and interest groups.
- As the membership contact, you should always be planning for your succession. This applies to every person in a leadership position. Select people to serve on a Membership Committee and look for candidates to mentor as a possible successor. **Leadership development is key to sustainability.**
- Familiarize yourself with the national website and the [Community Hub](#). You can track your members here and see when they need to renew. The branch president, membership contact, and finance leader have access to manage members on the Community Hub. You will need to login to access the functions. In August of 2022 AAUW California produced this helpful webinar: <https://www.aauw-ca.org/aauw-community-hub-webinars/>.
- At the beginning of the calendar year, set a goal for the number of new members that join the branch. If your branch has sixty members and you chose to grow by 5% percent, that would be three members. Determine activities that might draw new people. Set a goal for each activity. Be aware that non renewals will negate that number.
- Attend any **peer group meetings** hosted by AAUW California for people in membership roles. Topics will be relevant to your work. Information and Zoom registration will be sent to any branch leader identified as the membership contact. **Feel free to invite others.**
- Work closely with the membership treasurer or branch treasurer to make sure national, state, and branch dues are properly recorded in the Community Hub.
- Review the collection of AAUW California webinars. Many of them are relevant to your responsibilities. Host a “watch party” with other branch leaders and discuss. This can provide a lot of new ideas, putting everyone on the same page.

[Webinars - AAUW California](#)

- National provides “office hours,” a unique way to share feedback with AAUW National staff and get real-time answers to your questions. Sign up to attend [HERE](#). Please direct membership inquiries to national AAUW at connect@aauw.org.

Branch Ambassador

Every officer and every branch member is a branch ambassador! However, designating one or two people to purposefully welcome guests or potential members is an important role. Please note that this new title suggests a more involved relationship between the branch and new members. It is far beyond greeting people. It is actually a mentor who is responsible for helping the person to find her or his niche in the branch community.

A **branch ambassador** should:

- Attend as many branch meetings and activities as possible.
- Circulate among the attendees and introduce themselves.
- Have guests or new potential members fill out a contact card. A template is available [HERE](#).
- Provide new attendees with any fliers or brochures describing AAUW and the branch. A general flier for California branches is available [HERE](#).
- Introduce the new attendees to other members.
- Ask about their interests, then be sure to invite them to visit branch activities that would attract them.
- Find out how new attendees heard about our branch and organization.
- Allow some time for prospective members to learn about the organization before asking this person to join. Unless they show immediate interest, this gives you time to provide more information and to develop a bond.
- Follow up with an invitation to coffee with other members.
- Help plan a “new member orientation.” This could be a separate event or following a branch meeting.
- Connecting with other like-minded community groups could increase outreach to possible new members. Co-sponsor an event, lecture series, or fundraiser for the community.

Branch Membership Committee

Creating a group of people within your branch committed to growth makes the task easier than leaving it to one person. We suggest you spread out the work as a team. Include the **membership contact, the branch or membership treasurer, and one or two branch ambassadors**.

Part 2: Attracting New Members to Your Branch

Build Your Brand!

Tell your branch's story

- Your brand is your story and it is the most powerful marketing tool you have to attract new members. Branding is authentic messaging. It builds trust, creates loyalty, and helps retain and attract new members.
- AAUW's starts with the 1881 story of women who decided to create an organization celebrating their education with the hope that it would encourage other women to achieve higher education as well. We have been in existence for nearly 150 years and have grown to 170,000 members nationwide.
 - Create a similar story for your branch: What is your story? Branch history? Events? Members? Recognitions?
 - Determine what makes your branch attractive. (Tech Trek, local scholarships, community engagement, interest groups, etc.)
- Create a tagline that represents the spirit of your branch. AAUW California used the following tagline for a couple of years::



Create Marketing Materials

Take a look at your branch's brochure and evaluate its effectiveness as a marketing tool to attract new members. Ask yourself:

- Does it tell the story of your branch with pictures?
- Does it reinforce your mission, history, and values?
- Does it have a QR (quick response) code that can take prospective members to your branch website?
- Are there multiple points of contact?
- Does it list social media connections for your branch?
- Is the text succinct?
- Does it share the benefits of membership? Interest groups? Opportunities to volunteer?
- Is there a call to action to join? Does it show them how?

Take a look at this example of an effective brochure from the Beach Cities Branch.

What Does Good Branding Look Like In Your Communications?



What Does Good Branding Look Like In Your Communications?



To download a version of this sample brochure without markups, click [HERE](#).

- AAUW California created a one-page, customizable [flier](#) with a general overview of the programs and activities of the organization. It can be easily modified to fit your branch and its “personality” and contact information. If you need assistance with that, contact webteam@aauw-org.

- Create appealing marketing materials. Investigate using an app like Canva.com to create posters, newsletters, or general materials. It is free to non-profits and individuals and includes templates, photography, fonts, graphics, and editing tools.
- Add a QR (Quick Response) code to branch fliers, posters, or other communications. The QR code can take the person to the branch website by simply holding their phone over the code and tapping the link. There are several tutorials on YouTube for creating QR codes.
- Appoint a branch photographer to document events, awards, outreach, or speakers. Anyone with a cell phone can participate here and send the photos to one person. Be sure that all permissions are garnered before the pictures are used. This is especially important if a person is under age 18.
- 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.

Put the Word Out About Your Branch!

- Put your branch in the spotlight by identifying free media outlets. Local papers love short human interest stories. Put your calendar in the community activities calendar in the local paper as well. Submit photos of anything from events to scholarship recipients. Celebrate you!
- Create an account for your branch in the [Nextdoor](#) app. It only goes to your local neighborhood, but it is a great way to announce upcoming meetings or events.
- Subscribe to the local [Patch](#) online community newsletter in your area. Create a profile and submit news items. Patch will send your information to other nearby Patch communities as well.
- Identify your AAUW branch with banners, posters, or other items. Office Depot is a great resource for creating these inexpensively and AAUW members enjoy [discounts](#) on its products and services.
- Host a meeting at a community center or library on a topic of interest to your community. Provide fliers and make sure people know that you are the sponsor. Don’t be afraid to ask attendees to join AAUW using [Shape the Future](#) as an incentive.
- At community or branch events, always provide membership applications or potential member forms. An information table with an assigned member can also assist prospective members.

Look for possible members who express an interest in your events. For example, at a scholarship breakfast, offer membership forms to parents, guardians, and school counselors.

- Provide sign-up sheets at every meeting for Interest Groups. Make sure information about joining AAUW is clearly and prominently displayed.
- Take part in local events. March in a 4th of July parade and hold up your banners proudly.
- Distribute packets of branch business cards and brochures or fliers to your members for them to drop off at community places they frequent.
- Attend meetings of organizations with a similar focus. Offer to speak and ask them to speak to your members. Don't poach, but build awareness of AAUW that they could share with others.
- Develop a simple 30-second "elevator speech" explaining what your branch is and does and coach your members on delivering it. Have an answer ready for the question: "What's in it for me?"
- Offer Action Groups focused on short-term specific actions for those who are more interested in "doing" than in "talking." Actionable areas might include environmental cleanup days, drives to address food scarcity, or attending school board meetings when mandated curriculum is in question. Younger members looking for activism will be enticed by these.

Use Social Media!

In the age of social media, it is important that each branch creates its presence on various platforms. Some new members who dig into social media can learn about our amazing organization or might be directed our way by advertisements we've placed on Google and LinkedIn.

Social media is the town square of our day. It amazingly connects people to their childhood, high school, college, work, family and friends. We have a compelling message and mission. Having a presence on the various social platforms can increase our visibility and name recognition. We can stand proudly as we continue to empower the lives of women and girls.

Using social media can have some amazing results:

- It builds community and engagement.
- It shares your branch story and successes.
- It promotes events and provides a means to fundraise.

How to get started:

- Appoint a social media manager. This person could be your photographer and part of your membership team. Create a branch account on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Threads. There are several presentations in the [Tech Tools](#) page on the website to help with that.
- Encourage members to “like” postings and share postings to their own pages. More likes and shares equals better visibility.

Use Your Branch Ambassadors!

A Branch Ambassador is committed to making additional opportunities to get to know visitors or guests who attend branch activities and may be interested in joining. This lays the foundation for a meaningful relationship between the branch and new members. Ambassadors could do things such as:

- Use the contact information from the [contact card](#) and reach out by email thanking the person for attending.
- Send them a “potential member” email including more information. A sample template is available [HERE](#).
- Invite this person to coffee close to their work or home. Bring someone from the branch along with you. This face-to-face conversation really sets the tone for being part of such a great organization.
- Set up a “meet and greet,” either in-person or virtually, for potential members. Consider adding new members as well as enthusiastic current members.
- Invite them to a specific meeting. It could be a book group, walking group, wine club, upcoming big event, or just the next branch meeting.

Consider creating a special, large, easily-noticed badge for your Ambassadors.

Engage New Groups

Connect with local colleges

- Invite the AAUW campus representative, college students, current and retired faculty and staff to join your branch.
- Welcome e-student affiliates to branch events.
- Invite a college student/Tech Trek alum to serve on your branch board.

- Pay state and branch membership dues for scholarship awardees.
- Underwrite National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) registration fees.

Invite parents of program participants to join

Tech Trek, Gov Trek, and Speech Trek parents and recommending teachers have first-hand knowledge of the value of AAUW. Invite them to join.

Reach out to new sources

- Past local scholarship winners
- Members of other like-minded organizations
- New homeowners in your service area (give recruiting materials to realtors and title companies)
- Senior Centers
- Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association
- Industry associations – teachers' unions, Women in Engineering, etc.

Turn National Members into branch members

Almost 1000 National Members reside in California with no branch affiliation. They are an excellent pool to tap for new members. If you consider reaching out to them, contact webteam@aauw.ca.org to get names near your branch.

Part 3: The Ins and Outs of Managing Membership

The membership contact should become very familiar with the Community Hub on the national AAUW website. That is where all the magic happens! Check out the Hub's FAQ's page [HERE](#). Lots of your questions are answered there. (Please note that AAUW California does not manage the Community Hub. This is a National site.)

The membership contact, finance officer, and branch president have access to the list of members and their renewal data on the Community Hub. It's a great tool and one that will make your job much easier.

Join Us California!

AAUW California redesigned the [Join Us](#) page on its website to streamline the process. On the map you will notice a feature that allows prospective members to enter a zip code and voila`, branches near that zip code will pop up as red pins with links to their websites, if available. If the prospective member is interested, the page instructs them on how to access the Community Hub at National and complete the joining process.

Dues

California AAUW members pay dues at three levels: national, state, and branch. All dues are typically paid in a single payment. Members may pay online using the Community Hub, which will properly allocate the branch, state, and national portions. Payment may also be made by sending a check to the branch treasurer, who will forward the national and state portions appropriately.

Branch dues are set by the individual branches. They are not uniform and are in addition to AAUW National and AAUW California dues.

Levels of Membership

Knowing the different levels of membership and the dues associated with each will be very helpful information as you assist your members.

Consult the [dues schedule](#) on our website for up-to-date dues for the membership levels below:

- **Branch Members** pay national and state dues in addition to the applicable dues for each local branch of which they are a member. Dues may change occasionally but require membership approval at all levels.

- **Dual Members** are those who have paid national, state and branch dues to a primary branch and branch dues to a secondary branch.
- **Paid Lifetime Membership:** Paid life members pay a one time national rate and are exempt from further national dues. The formula for the most current level of dues is 20 times the annual rate. It is up to the branch to decide about local dues.
- **Honorary Life Member** This is a person who has been an AAUW member for 50 years. The national and state dues are waived for this person. It is up to the branch to decide about local dues. Please note, **it is the responsibility of the branch or member** to fill out the form for an Honorary Life Member. You can access a downloadable application [HERE](#).
- **Shape the Future:** A member who joins at a public meeting can join at a reduced rate. The person should contact the local branch for a *Shape the Future* coupon code. National dues are reduced to half if someone joins this way. You can learn how it works [HERE](#).
- **A college student with a future graduation date** can become a member with reduced national fees plus state and branch dues.
- **Students at C/U partner organization:** This group of students must contact their college university for a coupon code. Memberships are free to students.
- **AAUW National members** support our mission by paying National dues only.

Renewals

People ask if they will be notified that it is time to renew. Yes. Branches can be signed up to receive renewal notices automatically. Note that **some branches have opted out of receiving renewal notifications from National**. If you're not sure if your branch is already enrolled or if you want to sign up for renewal notices, contact connect@aauw-ca.org.

Members have a three-month window to renew their membership. The time of renewal is exactly one year from their last renewal. Please note, there is not a magic organization-wide renewal date. It's just each member's own anniversary date.

Please work closely with your branch or membership treasurer to track members' due dates and to assist them with renewing.

Part 4: Keeping Your Members

Make New Members Feel Welcome

It's important to help new members be a part of things. There are several steps you can take:

- Send a new member welcome email. Customize this [sample](#) to fit your approach.
- Provide a new member packet, which you might deliver in person or post on your website. It could include:
 - A schedule of meeting dates and program topics
 - The branch flier /brochure
 - A list of the branch leadership and names of people who can be helpful to contact
 - Information on Tech Trek and other projects
 - Longer descriptions of interest groups
 - A link to the branch directory or a copy of a printed directory
 - Newsletter
 - The password for website 'members-only' area
- Send a short bio of the new member to the newsletter editor for highlighting.
- Introduce the person at an upcoming branch meeting.
- Give the person the AAUW California Poppy Pin as a token of welcome, if your branch has purchased them.
- Conduct video interviews with new members. This "oral history" can have meaningful and sentimental value to your branch. Milestone celebrations like "75th Diamond Jubilee" for a branch could showcase these wonderful stories. The value of these is priceless. See [Video Interviews for New Members](#) for sample interview questions.

Keep Current Members Engaged and Recognized

- Do you know what activities resonate most with your members? AAUW California created instructions and a tracking sheet to record the number of members attending various events. It can be used for future planning to see which activities attract the most people. The simple tracking sheet and instructions are located [HERE](#).
- Every branch member should have a nametag so they feel recognized. It can be a pin, magnet tag, or a lanyard with a plastic nametag holder. If you are interested in purchasing the magnetic nametags from National, click [HERE](#) or use your AAUW membership [discount](#) to purchase from an office supply store.
- Get to Know Your Members: At the end of each meeting go around the room or the Zoom screen and ask each person if they have anything they would like to share. It can be a "brag"

about themselves or someone in their family or something they have accomplished. Tell them they have a minute, no longer. Refrain from commenting or asking questions until all are done.

- Have a “Member News” section in your newsletter and invite the members to send anything they would like to share to the newsletter editor. Even encourage them to include a picture if possible.
- Ask long-time members to share what AAUW has meant to them, why they keep renewing. Run a few short quotes in your newsletter.
- Periodically hold small “listening circles.” Make them “by invitation only” and reach out to individuals whom you’d like to engage more. Make the gatherings casual. Ask for feedback on how the branch is doing. Giving people a more personal forum to discuss the branch’s strengths and weaknesses makes them feel valued and may surprisingly result in volunteering.

Engage your Interest Groups

- Distribute a “Branch Buzz” to Interest Group chairs. It should contain three bullets **only**:
 - Something to celebrate: a branch accomplishment or “braggable” moment
 - Something upcoming: an announcement of events within that month only
 - Something to volunteer for: a request for help with small tasks that members can easily do

Group chairs should read it at their meetings each month. This is your link to those who only attend Interest Groups.

- Ask each group to organize one branch program each year related to their group’s theme. For example, the Book Group could propose a relevant book for the whole branch to read and host a program with readings of excerpts and discussion groups. The Hiking Group could present information on physical fitness for women or conduct a simple workout session.
- Have each Interest Group prepare a gift basket related to their theme (books, wine, exercise equipment, movie tickets, board games, etc.) to be sold at a fundraiser. This reminds members of the work of the larger organization.

Become a Culture of Recognition

Here's one idea: The AAUW California Poppy Pin

Make your members feel important and valued. A unique AAUW California pin is available for purchase that will be fun and meaningful for your members. Branches can use it to recognize:

- Years of service
- Outstanding contribution
- Leadership
- A new member at a branch meeting
- State project volunteer



The list could go on and on. But this small token could be a touching and tangible thank you. What if you thanked:

- An outgoing board member?
- A member who attended a special event?
- A member who brought in 5 to 10 new members (or more!)?
- Other?

Naming someone and letting a light shine on them even for a brief moment will be a huge motivator to be actively engaged in the branch. It can serve as a tangible token of appreciation and welcome. This California-shaped pin with poppies and the letters AAUW will be something that members can wear to every AAUW event.

The pins are extremely affordable. To see the cost and to order, go [HERE](#).

And there are other ways to recognize your members:

- Years of service pins - (Redlands Branch)
- Past president pin - (Napa County Branch)
- Named Gift Honoree - Branches can nominate a Named Gift Honoree for each \$750 contributed by the branch or branch members to AAUW Fund on or before December 31st. Details are [HERE](#).

Check out the [Branch Marketplace](#) on the state website to locate these items for purchase.

Regain Non Renewing Members

Members leave for various reasons. They may have difficulty with the renewal process or feel disconnected from the branch. An important part of retaining membership is understanding why people leave.

AAUW California may periodically develop a statewide survey to send to members who did not renew over a two-year period. Understanding their reasons for not renewing provides insight that can be very useful to your team and help you plan activities to keep them engaged.

If members indicate on the survey that they are interested in rejoining, you will be notified and can follow up with them personally.

Hearing the reasons that people choose to not renew their membership are important. It might be a time to look inward as a branch and identify things that could be changed.

Some of the data from the first state survey sent to these members provided a snapshot of the variety of reasons given:

- Health issues
- Difficulty navigating the process on National's Community Hub
- Belief that AAUW has become too political and they felt disrespected.
- A feeling of being disengaged from or ignored by the branch. This might be the most difficult to acknowledge. If someone comes to fewer and fewer meetings or events and disappears, did we notice? It begs the question, what did we **not** do to engage this member?. Where are those missed moments where a call, text, or invitation to coffee could have made a difference?

No matter why these individuals left, we need to reach out. A phone call or visit to someone's home may re-ignite the person's desire to reconnect. This is an opportunity for the Branch Ambassadors to work their magic.

Again, this is a conversation for your branch leadership team. By reflecting on the welcoming culture of your branch, what simple things could be done to make everyone feel seen? Growth can't happen without looking inward.