

Chapter Skill-Building Webinar: Reviving a Dormant Chapter



Welcome from National NOW Action Center



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Agenda

- Benefits of Reviving a Dormant Chapter
- Getting Started: Logistics
- Getting Ready: Working with Other NOW Leaders
- Outreach
- First Meetings and Actions

Benefits: Reviving Dormant Chapters

- It is often easier to revive a dormant chapter than start a new chapter
- Existing/at-large members may be waiting for someone to take leadership
- There may be existing money and/or supplies
- Increase presence of NOW in your community
- More chapters in your area/state/region = more activism
- Increase community activism for women's right issues



Case Study: Oklahoma NOW

- State chapter was dormant for 2-3 yrs, but had fizzled before then.
- Have a state coordinator from a state in region with a similar political climate. Kari Ann Rinker, Kansas NOW, is a mentor for OK NOW leader, Audra Cross.
- Talk with everyone you meet and always have your NOW business cards ready.
- Reach out to women's groups in your state.
- Connect to local political races.
- Recruit on college campuses.
- Utilize your chapter's Facebook page and keep it up-to-date with the latest news, events, and meeting info.
- Have free items at actions—like pink and purple balloons with now.org written on them.
- Have a monthly newsletter on the latest news, campaigns, actions and next meeting info.
- Have meetings with free food and networking opportunities, as well as at free public spaces.



Case Study: Oakland/Macomb Michigan NOW

- Oakland County NOW and Macomb NOW just recently merged. Macomb County NOW did not have very many active board members, but did not want to become dormant. They joined forces with Oakland County.
- In some cases, merging can expand your activist base and increase community outreach.
- Make sure to follow all the necessary procedures when merging chapters; let members know what is going on and allow them to give feedback.
- Have good online presence.
- Be sure to use social media.
- Make sure your chapter name includes the merged chapter area.
- Have strong local media presence.
- Partner with other local women's organizations.
- Go to big community events with NOW rounds.
- Have a lot of events and attend other group's events.
- Diversify your board for different perspectives.



Getting Started: Logistics

- Before you start your chapter, try to get as much information as possible from your state president, National NOW Action Center and existing chapter members.
- Questions to ask:
 - *Is there an active (but dormant) chapter in the area?*
 - *Are there still elected leaders for the chapter?*
 - *Is there a bank account? If so, where and who is the signer?*
 - *Are there existing files or chapter materials (signs, shirts, etc.)?*
 - *Is there information you need to be aware of, such as conflicts that led the chapter to go dormant?*



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Financial Considerations

- The chapter may or may not have existing funds.
- You may need a letter from National NOW to access an old bank account – just let us know.
- We recommend you close any old accounts and start a new account.
- National NOW keeps EIN numbers on file – you will become responsible for filling with the IRS.
- If failure to file resulted in loss of tax status, go to www.irs.gov/eo for forms to get reinstated.

Bylaws

- You may be able to get a copy of the chapter's old bylaws, but they may be lost or need updates.
- Review the sample bylaws on the chapters-only site.
- Make sure to keep bylaws simple and broad, so your chapter does not have to constantly keep updating them.
- Consider also using operating rules (optional) for more flexibility.
- Make sure to send updated copies of your chapter's bylaws to the National Action Center.



Is Merging Right for You?

- Pros:
 - *Your two chapters may already be working as one.*
 - *In some communities and areas, it may be easier to work with an expanded, merged membership.*
- Cons:
 - *Merging process can be time-consuming – requires taking steps as if entire chapter were deconvening (every member opt-out mailing).*
 - *Area can be so large as to be unworkable (long commutes to meetings).*

Old, Icky Conflicts

- While not always the case, some chapters go dormant due to an “old, icky conflict.”
- Remember, NOW is bigger than any one individual.
- If former leadership is not willing to communicate with you – don’t worry. The Action Center will work to help fill in the gaps.
- Don’t be insulted if some past members want to move on with their lives.
- Don’t sweat it too much – you’re starting fresh!

Raise Your Hand

- Are you currently or have you recently revived a dormant chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Were you able to communicate with previous leadership?
- What did you learn from the reasons why the chapter become dormant?
- Did any former members come back into leadership?

Getting Ready: Working with Other NOW Leaders

- Activists reorganizing the dormant chapter should outreach to regional and state leadership right away.
- Go to their local events, actions, meetings, and conferences.
- Existing chapters can provide newly re-forming chapters with models of how a chapter can be organized.
- Activists reorganizing should also check out the websites, facebook pages and twitters of local chapters in the area to get ideas and learn about upcoming events.



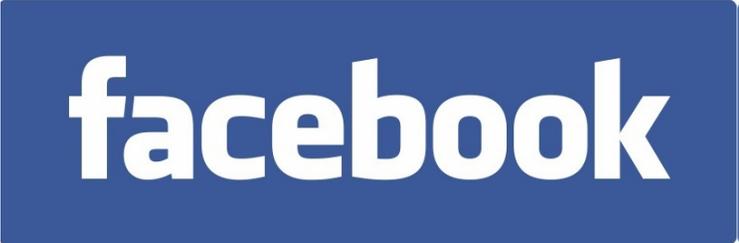
Outreach

- It is important to outreach in a variety of ways---make sure the community knows that you are starting your chapter up again and why the community needs it now more than ever.
- Be sure to reach out to old members, members who may be active or those who recently lapsed (you can get these lists from the National Action Center via the chapters-only site).
- Also create chapter website, facebook page, and a twitter---and if you have any great writers, a blog.
- Outreach to local media outlets to create relationships and let them know that your chapter is restarting.



How to Publicize Your Chapter

- Make sure that all of your sites have an up-to-date calendar of all upcoming meetings and actions.
- After meetings send to your email list a brief summary on what the chapter is working on and what was discussed at the meeting -- it may spark someone's interest to get more involved.
- Post fliers about meetings and actions at local coffeehouses, student centers, churches, etc.
- Make sure to create a facebook event for all actions and tweet actions to engage the online community.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.The Twitter logo, consisting of the word "twitter" in a light blue, rounded, lowercase font with a white outline.

Raise Your Hand

- Has your chapter ever worked with another chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Does your chapter reach out to help revive dormant chapters in your area?
- How do we best provide activists support while reviving a dormant chapter?
- How do we prevent a dormant chapter from becoming dormant again?

Your First Meeting

- Your first meeting should be well publicized via your website, email blasts, facebook page, twitter, blog, etc.
- Make sure to start the meeting off with a fun icebreaker.
- Have lots of open discussion in the meeting, so many people get their voices heard.
- Talk about what people want their chapter to do---draft an action plan for the first couple of months, even the longer if you can.
- Try to have members from old chapter tell everyone what worked and what didn't work in the past.
- Have everyone try to bring a friend to the next meeting or the first action.
- If needed, make a plan to hold and publicize elections.



The Importance of Actions

- Actions will let your community know that your chapter is back and ready to take to the streets--- make sure to address the issues that your chapter is passionate about and that will make a difference to your community.
- Invite coalition partners to your actions and make them feel included.
- Always, always be prepared at actions for potential members with membership brochures or business cards with the chapter's contact info.



Raise Your Hand

- Has your chapter gone through changes over the years?

Discussion Questions

- How can chapters make their processes more efficient?
- Have you ever rewritten your bylaws?
- How have you dealt with membership turnover?

Resources from National NOW

We are here to:

- Help you get a membership list of all existing and recently lapsed members (via the chapters only site);
- Help you find supplies;
- Help you with organizing basics;
- Help you get in touch with your state president, regional director and other chapters in the area;
- Help you plan an action;
- Help you navigate the IRS;
- Help you try to track down former leaders;
- And so much more!!!



Next Chapter Skill-Building Session

- Working Together: State and Local Chapters
- Wednesday, June 6, 2012 at 8 p.m. EST
- Contact Anita Lederer at fieldorg@now.org for any questions or feedback you would like to share
- Share your feedback:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SRVDYRJ>