

Building a Better Membership Plan: Steps for Recruitment

2025 American Gourd Society Leadership Summit

Purpose:

Listed are key steps to create a clear, effective action plan for growing your chapter's membership. The plan will identify how to attract new members and measure the progress the chapter is making along the way.

1. Define the Ideal Member

- **Target Audience:** Adults (18+), hobbyists, artists, gardeners, crafters, retirees, professionals seeking creative outlets.
- **Key Qualities:** Interest in art or gardening, open to community involvement, able to attend in-person activities.
- **Financial Expectation:** Comfortable paying a minimal membership fee to support group activities and resources.

2. Outreach and Recruitment Strategy (Adult Focused)

Local Presence

- **Art/Craft Shows:** Rent a booth or demonstration table where adults naturally shop and network.
- **Farmers' Markets:** Set up during peak seasons — offering small, adult-centered hands-on demos (like quick gourd painting or pyrography samples).
- **Garden Clubs and Master Gardener Programs:** Offer brief presentations about gourd growing and art (attendees often have discretionary income and like hobby expansion).
- **Chamber of Commerce Mixers/Local Business Networking Events:** Many local professionals look for creative outlets and service opportunities.

Online Presence

- **Social Media Ads:** Specifically target adults 30-70 interested in hobbies, gardening, crafting, or "maker" activities.
- **LinkedIn Posts/Groups:** Especially to attract semi-retired, retired, or hobby-focused professionals.
- **Email List Building:** Offer a free downloadable guide ("Top 5 Tips for Growing and Using Gourds in Art") in exchange for email sign-ups.

Strategic Partnerships

- Community Colleges (continuing education departments)
- Botanical gardens
- Art supply stores (they often have bulletin boards)
- Retirement communities or senior centers with active art groups

3. Evaluate, Adjust and Improve

- **Annual Member Drive:** Offer a small bonus (like a free seed pack or gourd starter kit) for joining or renewing membership.