

Recruiting and Building a Diverse, Active Membership

Last revised in 2004

Purpose: For participants to increase their confidence, skill and level of commitment to building a more diverse and active membership.

Participants: Members of KFTC chapters in Louisville, Lexington and Rowan County who participated in a series of leadership schools for chapter leaders in 2004.

Timeframe: 3 hours

Introductions and Ice-breaker (10 minutes)

Ask each person to say his or her name, chapter and 2 reasons why they stay active in KFTC.
Review the agenda and goals for the day.

Develop a vision of a growing, active and diverse chapter (30 minutes)

- Ask each person to close his/her eyes, put his/her head on the table, and relax.
- Explain that you will describe a situation, and they should try to visualize it while you speak.
- Imagine that you are at your chapter's holiday party at the end of the year.
- As you arrive at the meeting, you notice many other cars parked nearby. People in coats, some carrying food, move in small groups toward the door.
- You walk into the building and smell the food table, which members have piled high with potluck dishes and desserts.
- There is a buzz in the air as people greet each other and make introductions.
- You notice children running into the room next store where there are activities planned.
- You take the opportunity to walk around the meeting room and view the items on various tables and hanging from the walls.
- You pass by a display that shows a timeline of the chapter's work in the past year. On the chart are pictures from several large demonstrations, an important meeting with elected officials, and a couple dates when the chapter won specific, small victories. The timeline also shows many, many recruitment, fundraising and leadership training events that were held throughout the year.
- You see a bulletin board with the names and pictures of new members on it. You look with pride at the images. The chapter has worked enormously hard this year, and here is the proof of your success. Membership has grown so much in your chapter.
- The leadership of the chapter has broadened as new people have joined and become active. You smile at how many new faces you know personally.
- You look around the room as the crowd begins to take their seats.
- You think of all the work that took place to bring the chapter to this place.
- You remember a couple of the most successful recruitment methods and events.
- You think back on the important work that a few key leaders in the chapter did really made it possible to recruit and keep so many new people.
- You think about the ways that the chapter changed to be more welcoming and accessible to new members, and to get people involved right away.
- You remember the hard work you put in to make these things happen.
- You keep thinking about all the things that happened to make membership recruitment this year so successful.
- As you sit down at the table, you wonder how the chapter will grow in the year to come!

Ask people to open their eyes. Explain that together we are going to create a list of all the things this chapter (the one in your vision) did to recruit and keep new members.

- What were some of the events or activities that led to this chapter's membership growth?
- What made this kind of growth possible?
- What did you see during this exercise that you haven't seen or thought about before?
- What are 2 things that your chapter could do to make this vision real?
- What will you do to make this story real?

BREAK (10 minutes)

Review the nuts and bolts of recruiting KFTC members (50 minutes)

Ask: What does membership in KFTC mean? Possible answers include:

Receive bts
Receive action alerts and opportunities for leadership development
Opportunity to shape social justice issues locally and statewide
Their voice is seriously heard and valued
They are challenged to learn, grow, take risks, take leadership
They get the right to vote and govern their own organization.
They have access to a staff that is committed to their personal development.
Sense of self-worth
A community of diverse people with shared vision/values
The power to influence and change the future of KY

Ask: Why do people join? Possible answers include:

To address individual needs, problems
To advance a broad vision of social change
They believe in KFTC and our goals
They have personal relationships or friends in KFTC
They are angry. They want help. They want to be involved.
They were ASKED!

Ask: Why does KFTC need a growing, diverse, active membership? Possible answers include:

Membership is a measure of our power and strength
Dues are a measure of people's ownership and investment in KFTC
Grassroots money (dues) can be used for lobbying
Foundations base their grants – in large part – on the fact that we have a real base.
As a membership organization, we are who we recruit!

Ask: What are some of the most important things you should say when asking someone to join?

Possible answers include:

KFTC is grassroots and membership based
We are a statewide group working for social and environmental justice.
We are committed to building a diverse membership and working against racism.
This is your organization. You help decide which issues we work on and how!
KFTC's history, recent accomplishments and current issues.
Membership dues are \$15-50 based on ability to pay.
Will you join KFTC today?

5. Role play (30 minutes)

Ask for two volunteers. Choose one of the scenarios below. Assign each volunteer a role. Then ask them to begin a conversation in which one person asks the other person to join KFTC. Let the role play go for about 5 minutes or until it reaches a natural stopping place.

Debrief the role play. Ask each volunteer to offer what the “asker” did well. What could he or she have done better or differently? Then ask observers to share what they thought went well and what could have been better.

Repeat with a different scenario if time allows.

Scenarios:

- **At a recruiting table.** You are recruiting members at a health fair sponsored by a church. You are sitting at a table with some visual displays, petition forms, and KFTC information. A person leans slightly in your direction and asks, “What’s all this about?”

- **Talking with someone you know.** You are having lunch at work with a co-worker. Today she mentions that she is was disappointed in the work of the General Assembly. She wonders what it will take before Kentuckians start to wake up. You decide to take this opportunity to tell her about KFTC and invite her to join.

- **After a meeting (approaching someone who has spoken up at a public meeting).** You have been attending a public hearing about an issue your chapter is involved with. You watch as someone who is not connected with the chapter rises to speak. He does a good job speaking to the issue, although he makes a point to say, “I’m not with these people.” After the meeting, you approach him to share a bit about KFTC and ask him to join.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Make commitments (30 minutes)

Ask each participant to make a list of 2 to 20 people they will ask to join KFTC in the next 2 months. For each person, identify how you will ask them (a call, a letter, a visit?) and when.

Then, as a group, brainstorm ideas about specific ways the chapter can do outreach and recruit members in the coming 3 months. Prioritize this list and get commitments. Who will take responsibility for each piece?

Evaluate the day and head home. (10 minutes)

Materials:

Tips on asking people to join
Effective recruitment methods handout

