

New Club Building Handbook



www.optimist.org/newclub

Mission, Vision and Purposes of Optimist International

Mission

By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves.

Vision

Optimist International will be recognized worldwide as the premier volunteer organization that values all children and helps them develop to their full potential.

Purposes

To develop optimism as a philosophy of life utilizing the tenets of the Optimist Creed; to promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs; to inspire respect for the law; to promote patriotism and work for international accord and friendship among all people; to aid and encourage the development of youth, in the belief that the giving of one's self in service to others will advance the well-being of humankind, community life and the world.

The Optimist Creed

Promise Yourself

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.

To think only of the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble

Special Note to Club Builders

In our many years of building new Clubs, one thing is sure – **there is more than one way to build a New Club**. This handbook will present some of those ways. You may know of or find a way, which better fits your needs. By all means, try it!

The bottom line is **you must get started**. The reason most Clubs fail is because they do not begin the project and open the New Club kit.

This handbook will encourage you to use a group of **local people to build your Club**. It has been found that when you use local people, you will build a stronger, healthier Club in a shorter period of time.

We have also shown some examples of **target markets**, such as *Close Communities and Young Professional Clubs*. Try these ideas if they fit your situation. A New Club project is not easy, but any individual or Club can be successful if you try and follow a set plan.

New Club Philosophy

Adopted December 1996, The Board of Directors of Optimist International has adopted an official “New Club Philosophy” and directed that every effort be made to share it with Optimists everywhere, especially those interested in the New Club program. Optimist leaders are encouraged to share this philosophy at New Club workshops and wherever it is deemed appropriate. This philosophy is as follows:

The primary goal of Optimist International in the area of growth is to build and develop Clubs that contribute to the betterment of their communities and play a major role in the development of our youth.

Clubs should be built to attain maximum strength for the Club as well as Optimist International. Strong, viable Clubs are of paramount importance to Optimists everywhere.

A well-built and properly structured Club, with complementing leadership, will give strength to new Members and seasoned Optimists alike. The ultimate goal is a Club composed of Members proud to share their time, talents and experiences.

Sponsors across the organization are encouraged to approach their goal expeditiously and with great enthusiasm. As a builder seeks his or her objective, it should be done with a positive attitude, always keeping in mind that new Clubs are built today to last.

Prospective charter Members must be given an opportunity to really understand the full benefits of affiliation. New Clubs should be officially organized only after the candidates for charter membership have a thorough familiarization with the objectives of the organization as well as the real purpose of their Club.

Every Club built should and must become an active, contributing force in this organization, and in its community. Each should be comprised of dedicated Members who yearn for an opportunity to grow in and with Optimism, and in meaningful service to youth and community.

Foreword

Congratulations New Club Builder! You are about to embark upon perhaps the greatest service project possible: The building of a new Optimist Club! There are three statements that best describe this undertaking: It takes the greatest commitment; it offers the greatest challenge; and it returns the greatest reward. You will enjoy a great feeling of accomplishment by helping another community reap the rewards of an Optimist Club. In addition, you will make great lifelong friendships and experience tremendous personal and professional growth.

Suppose you build a Club that lasts years or even centuries. You will affect the lives of many generations, most of whom are not born yet. There is great truth to the saying that, "By helping others achieve what they want out of life, you can get anything out of life that you want."

There are four basic components to an NCB program:

1. Commitment/Getting Started
2. Roster Building/Developing Structure of Club
3. Becoming an Optimist Club
4. Follow Up Support

This handbook contains in depth guidelines on the first three components. A new Club project is not officially finished until the follow-up has been successfully completed. For more detailed information regarding the New Club Follow-Up Program, please see the New Club Follow-Up Program Guide on our website at www.optimist.org/e/member/newclub9.cfm or have us send you a hard copy by contacting the Membership Department.

Commitment

What Constitutes “Sponsorship?”

Sponsors are current Optimist members who are responsible for guiding the new Club through the preliminary steps towards becoming an official Optimist Club. This includes helping to develop the new Club’s roster, maintaining contact with the core members of the roster, attending the preorganization meeting and completing the “New Club Follow-Up Program.”

Once your Club has decided to Sponsor a new Optimist Club, please file the New Club Sponsor Commitment Form located at the back of this document, or access the New Club Building Database online at www.optimistleaders.org to add the new Club target community to the list of “Clubs in Progress.”

The New Club Database will be your online tool for tracking your new Club progress, along with the rest of your team. It will take you from start to finish, including a place to record contact information for potential new members on the Roster. As you take steps toward organizing the new Club you should update the record on the New Club Database. It keeps everyone in the loop, including your District and Optimist International, so that you’ll have support if you ever need it.

Types of Optimist Clubs

Before you begin building a Club, it is important to note that no two Clubs are the same. What works for one Club may not work for another. There are two basic types of Clubs:

1. **Traditional Club** – A traditional Optimist Club conducts a number of exciting, youth-oriented events and fund raisers each year. The Club meets on a regular basis at a fixed location.

College Club – A College Club is traditional Club built around a college or university and is primarily made up of college students interested in service, leadership and professional development.

2. **Non-Traditional Clubs:**

A. **Sports Club** – A sports Club is built with the primary goal to serve youth through athletics.

B. **Single Focus Clubs** – Clubs that are built around a single cause or activity. Examples include marching bands, youth centers, etc.

The New Club Committee

The New Club Committee should include one to three members of the Sponsor Club who have the time and interest to devote to the task of building a new Club. They should be people capable of presenting the philosophy of Optimist Clubs. A small committee is usually more effective than a large one which may outnumber prospective members at new Club meetings.

It is also important that the New Club Committee keep close communication with their District representatives and Optimist International. This will ensure that all available resources are utilized during the NCB process and that the new Club will have maximum support from all levels of the organization.

The Sponsor and New Club Costs

Sponsor Clubs pay no fees and sponsorship should not involve more than minor administrative costs towards building the new Club. It is perfectly acceptable for meals to be on a “Dutch treat,” pay-as-you-go basis. While the Sponsor Club sometimes contributes to the new Club by helping with their Charter fee, it is not required or expected.

Getting Started

Selecting the New Club Site

The selection of a new Club site is best made by the Sponsoring Club or the District. Some Districts assign sponsorship responsibility to Member Clubs. However, the opportunities for the establishment of new Optimist Clubs are almost unlimited.

One way to get started is to simply use a map to mark the locations of Optimist Clubs within a chosen radius from your Club. Then, select a community that does not have an Optimist Club. You may contact the International Office to verify if there is another Club in the same geographical area. Visit the selected site and meet with civic leaders to begin your site study.

Close Communities can be another good starting point. Examples of close communities are churches, alumni groups and retirement communities. A close community for NCB purposes might be loosely defined as any situation where civic minded adults live, work, play, worship or associate together.

Converting Pre-Existing Clubs – Occasionally, an existing, unaffiliated Club or organization seeks or agrees to become an Optimist Club. When such an occasion arises, the process is very similar to building any other Club; however, special arrangements can be made in those situations. All requirements for affiliation apply. Sponsor Clubs encountering such opportunities should immediately communicate with the NCB Department at the International Office for full details.

Needs Assessment

Before getting underway, it is important that you know what the needs of the community are, whether there are available manpower resources and if the community is receptive to having a new Club. One way to do this is by conducting a Needs Assessment. Needs Assessments are a way to identify and understand the needs within a community in order to build a strong Optimist Club.

3 Steps to a Needs Assessment:

1. Perform an Analysis – Conduct a demographic profile of your community. Identify what other organizations exist in the area and what they do for the community. Remember, while there may be other service organizations in your area, Optimist Clubs are unique. Use a City Profile form to get started.
2. Identify Needs & Opportunities – There will always be an opportunity to help others; the key is identifying them. After you have identified the needs, the next step is to identify relevant problems that a Club can help solve. This creates a purpose and focus for the new Club. It also helps the Club form an identity within the community.
3. Identify Solutions – The service opportunities in this community can be fulfilled by starting an Optimist Club. It’s up to you to show the new community how an Optimist Club can solve the community’s needs. Work with the residents and show them how they have all the resources to better their community, and how an Optimist Club is the vehicle through which they can make changes. Think of specific projects that an Optimist Club could do to serve the community.

Roster Building/Developing Structure

Once you have determined the site where you will be building a new Club; the next step is to begin building the new Club's roster. These are the people who will become the Charter members of the new Club. An Optimist Club must have an adequate Charter membership. It assures a Club of better personnel, good selection of leadership, adequate financing and attendance conducive to good meetings. 15 initial members are required before a Club can organize, but having more Charter Members gives the new Club a stronger foundation on which to build. Charter Members may not already be Members of an existing Optimist Club.

It is not intended that the sponsoring Club solely assume the task of assembling a new Club's Charter roster. Here are some suggestions for the sponsor Club:

1. Start by developing a core group of 5 or 6 individuals. They should be:
 - A. Well known in the community.
 - B. Community or business leaders.
 - C. People with good reputations within the community.
 - D. Outgoing, interested and willing to help build an Optimist Club.
2. Schedule a meeting with your core group.
 - A. Have a discussion on reasons for forming an Optimist Club in their community. List needs, benefits and potential obstacles.
 - B. Ask your core members to start thinking of others in the community who they think would be a good fit for the group. Ask each to invite at least 5 people to the first informational meeting.
 - C. Decide on a day, time and place for regular informational meetings. It is important that informational meetings be held regularly and consistently. The location should be private and able to accommodate 35-40 people.
 - D. Make it clear to the core group that it is their Club, composed of individuals they select, and that they must assume leadership. Select one member of the core group to be the temporary chairperson and someone to be the temporary secretary-treasurer.
 - E. Establish a membership fee. Membership fees range from \$30-\$40. These will go towards the Charter Fee of \$425 that must be paid to Optimist International before a Club can organize. The rest will go into the new Club's treasury. These are different than annual dues which are decided on later when the club is ready to charter. For more information see the Dues and Fees page in the Reference Material section of this handbook.
3. Hold weekly informational meetings.
 - A. Keep as informal as possible with ample opportunity for questions from potential Members.
 - B. See the Benefits of Affiliation page in the reference section for selling points.
 - C. Invitations to additional potential Members should be an order of business at every meeting.

- D. Begin collecting membership applications and fees (\$30-\$40) at the first meeting.
4. In between informational meetings.
- A. Publicize your next Informational Meeting. A Facebook page is a great way to start publicizing the new Club. See reference material for a template press release.
 - B. Maintain close communication with your core group.
 - C. Send out reminder emails to each candidate before each meeting.
 - D. Stay in touch with Optimist International, the Governor, Lt. Governor and District Chairperson. Don't hesitate to ask for help.
 - E. Maintain a prospect list on the New Club database:
www.optimistleader.org/newclubdatabase. Add to it regularly.

Bylaws

Optimist International provides standard bylaws, with certain provisions for use by all Clubs. Copies are available online and in the back of this document. **New Clubs should not copy the bylaws of the Sponsor Club.** Bylaws must be studied and ready for adoption before a club can organize.

Club Dues

Club dues, paid annually, semi-annually or quarterly, at the Club's discretion, must be established by the Club. The Bylaws of Optimist International require that individual Member dues be in an amount sufficient to pay the Member's District and International dues and cover the administrative expenses. It is recommended that annual Member dues be established in the \$65-\$100 range. As a new Club needs funds immediately, Club dues should never be waived.

Club Names

Club names should be simple and recognizable in your community. The term "Optimist Club" must be in the Club name. It is also required that the name specify the location of the Club. Generally a Club name will look like the following:

[Group name] Optimist Club of [city], [state]
[City] Optimist Club of [state]

You may choose to incorporate something unique to your group in addition to the location. New Clubs may not adopt names which duplicate those of existing Clubs. The Optimist International Policy on naming is available for your reference in the back of this document. Optimist International also reserves the right to reject objectionable names. If you have any issues or questions related to Club names, please contact the International Office.

Becoming an Optimist Club

Requirements

1. 15 Charter Members who have completed membership applications and paid the membership fee. A minimum of 9 of these Charter Members must attend the Charter Organizational Meeting.
2. Standard Club bylaws studied and ready for adoption.
3. Reports on hand at Optimist International in St. Louis on each of the last two informational meetings.
4. The new Club must have an assigned Field Representative from Optimist International (see below).
5. Notify and inform the Governor and District NCB Chairperson of the Club's intent to organize.

Optimist International Field Representatives

International Field Representatives are Optimist Members who are authorized by Optimist International to act in an official capacity in the field to certify the organizational paperwork for a New Optimist Club. Optimist International staff relies on these individuals to authenticate that a New Club is organized in accordance with the policies and bylaws of Optimist International. A Field Representative is assigned to each New Club by the Member Services department at Optimist International. They are given a Club Number and Field Kit and preside over the Organizational Meeting. New Clubs should request a Field Representative at least 2 weeks prior to their organizational meeting.

Functions of the Field Representative

1. Conduct of the organization meeting.
2. Collaboration with Secretary-Treasurer in establishment of Club records.
3. Installation of Club Officers.
4. Description of District and International functions and services.
5. Distribution of supplies to Club and Members.
6. Preparation of all forms and papers comprising Club's application for affiliation.

Pre-organizational Meeting

The Pre-organizational meeting is schedule with the Field Representative about two hours before the official organization meeting. The temporary Chairperson, Secretary-Treasurer and a Sponsor Club Representative should be present. The Sponsor Club Representative and temporary Chairperson should make arrangements for this essential meeting as soon as the Field Representative's arrival plans are known. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- A. Review progress to date.
- B. Review applications
- C. Check that membership fees (minimum \$30) are in.
- D. Bylaws are ready
 1. Club name
 2. Day and time of meeting
 3. Membership fee
 4. Annual dues
- E. Prepare for official organization meeting.

The Organizational Meeting

This exciting event is when the new Club is officially organized. The International Field Representative is present to approve all paperwork and report back to Optimist International that everything is in order. After this meeting the Club is approved to operate as a member Club of Optimist International. The Club will then be covered under the Liability Insurance umbrella that is given to all Clubs.

Charter Membership

The Charter membership of a new Club shall consist of those individuals (not less than 15) who appear and establish membership and submit proper forms, fees and dues, as required by the new Club's bylaws, at the new Club's organizational meeting. Additional Charter members, who submit the required fees and forms in writing, may be added to the roster for up to 15 days. The only exception to this is in September. All Charter members shall date form the official organization meeting. Conclusive evidence, such as cash, checks or duplicate deposit slips must be available to the Field Representative at the organizational meeting. Charter members shall be persons who do not hold membership in any other Optimist Club.

Orientation and Education

A significant factor in Optimist International's method of sponsoring new Clubs is the care exercised in assisting the new Club in establishing a suitable administrative structure and useful effective committees. The chairpersons of such committees as those on Membership, Programs, Youth Activities, Publicity, Fellowship, Finance, Community Service and others are appointed by the President as soon as possible after Organization Meeting. A review of these committees will be done by the Field Representative during the Organization Meeting and all Charter Members will be encouraged to volunteer for at least one committee.

Follow-up Program

The New Club Building process is not complete until the “New Club Follow-Up Program” has been completed. For more detailed information regarding the New Club Follow-Up Program, please see the New Club Follow-Up Program Guide on our website at <http://www.optimist.org/e/member/newclub9.cfm> or have us send you a hard copy by contacting the Membership Department.

New Club Building Requirements

1. Each new Club may have no more than two (2) Sponsor Clubs. A Sponsor Club is not required.
2. A new club is required to have a minimum of 15 new members signed and paid prior to being granted a Charter.
3. A minimum of 9 of the new club members are required to be present at an official Organizational Meeting to hold the meeting.
4. New US and Canadian Clubs are required to pay \$425 to Optimist International.
5. The Charter Fee for Tier 2 Countries is \$325, and for Tier 3 Countries it is \$225.
6. There may be a maximum of four Builders of Excellence for each new club built
 - a. Two Builders of Excellence are allowed for each Sponsor Club
 - b. A BOE does not have to be a member of the Sponsor Club
7. An Authorized Representative of Optimist International must be present to conduct the official Organizational Meeting and certify the paperwork for a New Club
8. Optimist International will file for a Tax ID number for New Clubs once the Club Organizes and Optimist International has received their paperwork.
 - a. Optimist International should be informed If a Tax ID is required before Charter fee payment can be made
9. A New Club’s Charter Roster stays open for 15 days following the Organization date of the Club, or until September 30th

For more information refer to www.optimist.org/newclub and policies on www.optimistleaders.org.