



CLUB OPENERS GUIDE



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Opening new Kiwanis clubs is vital to children and communities — and to Kiwanis. But it's more than a matter of gathering people, putting them together and then wishing everyone luck. To open a Kiwanis club that endures, you need to determine the right people and the right places. That requires commitment and attention to detail. Here are the steps to a successful club-opening process.

PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION

It all starts by getting people involved and keeping them up to date — especially Kiwanis district leaders. Work with them to specify sites. They have knowledge of the area, as well as connections to Kiwanians and others.

They're not the only ones. Tell area club and division leaders about your plans. Ask for help from the lieutenant governor — as well as club openers and club coaches in the area. Contact the district's Kiwanis International board counselor and/or area director. Don't be shy! After all, you'll want plenty of help for plenty of work.

Research

Look for information about a community and develop a spreadsheet (e.g., a Google sheet) of potential members. Internet searches can provide insights regarding each site, including demographic information. Here are the kinds of people, data and other facts to look into:

- **Community statistics and insights.** Get answers regarding the area population, unemployment rates, median household income, etc. What are the main industries? How many are employed locally? What percentage drive to another community for work? Where do they go?
- **School districts.** How many are there in the community (private, public, parochial)? Who are the principals, superintendents and school board members? Is there an active PTA or PTO — and who are the leaders?
- **Municipal leaders.** Find out who holds elected and appointed positions such as police and fire chiefs, city council members, parks and recreation directors, mayor, etc.
- **Business leaders.** Get their names and contact information — and more. Are they civic-minded? Do banks require community involvement? What restaurants/local businesses give back to the community?
- **Places of worship.** Learn the locations and the leaders (e.g., pastors, priests and rabbis) — as well as any youth directors. For example, Methodist Church leaders have traditionally been receptive, as have youth leaders of megachurches, especially those that have family life centers and youth sports programs.
- **Like-minded groups.** It's a good sign when there are organizations that serve people and improve the community. Look for active clubs or chapters with programs that address literacy, food insecurity, inclusive play-spaces and other local issues. Do they sponsor youth programs in the schools? Do any of them focus on kids and/or adults with special needs?

Reaching out

Once you know the area and its communities a little better, start contacting the people who live there. In particular, reach out to the service-oriented residents — especially the Kiwanis members in the area — who can help you find prospects and open clubs.

- **Ask for existing Kiwanis clubs.** Engage the district’s executive director and/or secretary right away — by requesting information on clubs in the area around your sites. Learn when and where the clubs meet and get an email address for club secretaries.
- **Request a list of area SLP clubs.** The potential for sponsorship and mentoring can help make a compelling case for a new Kiwanis club. Knowing about unsponsored SLP clubs can give you an especially powerful advantage.
- **Share selected sites with other Kiwanians.** There are several ways to spread the word: through the district newsletter, web site, nearby division council meetings, the midyear conference and/or the district convention. You might be amazed by how many members know another member — or a business or civic leader — in the area.
- **Enter each new club site into the Club Opening Tracker.** This will prompt Kiwanis International to send each club opener a Club Opening Kit full of important information. (The kits include 75 membership brochures with applications — so if you’re having a larger event with multiple sites, you may need to contact Member Services to order enough.)
- **Consider joining influential civic organizations.** The local chamber of commerce is a good place to begin building a database of prospective members — and getting access to communities’ movers and shakers. Also consider the United Way chapter, local leadership programs and others. And do quick internet searches for insurance agencies, real estate firms, youth-serving nonprofits and more.
- **Shadow a club opener.** Preparing a club opening event can be an opportunity to provide real-life experience to lieutenant governors (and lieutenant governors-elect) from around the district. By shadowing veteran club openers, they gain the confidence to go back home and start working with others to open new clubs in their respective divisions.



ASSEMBLING THE COACHING TEAM

For each site, secure an enthusiastic sponsoring club and two club coaches. While calling on a local club to become a sponsor, recruit club leaders who would be willing to serve as the club coaches. Remember, they would be dual members — in their current club and in the new club. (A best practice is for the club coach to be a dual member of the new club for a minimum of two years.) For the sake of continuity, it helps if they can also participate in the club-opening event.

If a club is reluctant to become a sponsor, consider asking two nearby clubs to serve as co-sponsoring clubs, with each covering the US\$100 cost for one club member to become a coach for the new club. And remember, sometimes an appeal from the current district governor carries more clout than from a lieutenant governor or district membership leader.

LOGISTICS

Like any high-quality event, the club opening will require you to put several pieces in place before it starts. From personnel to location and more, here are some elements to consider.

- **Recruit area Kiwanians as drivers.** While calling on local clubs about sponsorship, recruit from their members to serve as drivers for the club-opening event. Ideally, you would get six local drivers for every site, so they can take a team of two openers to appointments and cold calls. Members of Golden K clubs can be a good resource, since much of the process takes place during the workday.
- **Persuade CKI and Key Club leaders to participate.** When you share the sites with local Key Club and CKI leaders, don't forget to ask them to help with the club-opening event — even if only for a day or a half-day. Remember, they're a living showcase for our SLP programs!
- **Locate meeting places for the club-opening teams.** You'll need space for midday lunch meetings and an organizational meeting. Search for a private meeting room that holds 25-30 people. Seek a spot owned by someone who you would like to recruit.
- **Order collateral materials.** Contact Kiwanis International for a club-opening kit full of pertinent collateral materials for each site. Once you have selected the date, time and place for a site's first informational meeting, design and print flyers about the meeting. The club-opening team can distribute them as they visit prospective members.



SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS

Ultimately, the team should make phone calls and set up appointments with potential members for about a month before the club-opening event. A good rule of thumb: schedule at least 20 appointments per day before the club-opening event. Like every other step in the process, this one requires preparation and research before the team members dive in.

- **Develop a spreadsheet of local contacts.** The ideal person is someone familiar with the area who also likes to work independently from home — and has experience with Excel spreadsheets. This contact list can also be a resource for the new club’s membership committee when they begin their work.
- **Draft district leaders and/or experienced club openers to help.** This is where established knowledge and contacts can prove especially useful. They can suggest and help you reach out to school district superintendents, school board members, principals, local officials, nonprofit youth-agency leaders and key business leaders. (You might supply a suggested calling script and email/voicemail tips.) Load up the “heavy hitters” early on the first day of the event to get referrals and then make appointments.
- **Prepare a boilerplate email.** Sometimes the “gatekeepers” of civic and business leaders ask for written information to share with their bosses. Develop consistent language that team members use and agree on. Make sure there is also an attachment with information regarding the organizational meeting, so assistants and gatekeepers can put it on their bosses’ calendars.

MARKETING THE CLUB

A new Kiwanis club is exciting for a community. But excitement doesn’t create itself. Let people know about your club-opening event! From social media to good, old-fashioned word of mouth, take advantage of resources that spread the word — and generate interest among potential members.

- **Get your district’s PR coordinator involved.** The PR coordinator may be able to send news releases or fact sheets to local governmental and educational newsletters. Some districts have even purchased inexpensive Facebook ads to generate interest in the club-opening event.
- **Establish a Facebook page before the event.** Facebook is a popular platform with an extensive reach. You may also choose to launch Twitter or Instagram pages. Altogether, social media is a good way for your club-opening team to beam out information. Especially if you post pictures! For example, photos of new charter members signing on during the event can create a sense of momentum.
- **Get key endorsements and referrals.** Stay in touch with the community leaders you contacted when scheduling appointments (see above). See if they will put in a good word with the community and/or encourage people they know to join. Ask for testimonials — along with ideas about how a Kiwanis club can serve kids in their community and help with city/town events. And ask them to join! If they decline, ask them to designate a deputy to join.



WRAPPING UP

The club-opening event will end, but the immediate aftermath is equally important to the club's success. And once again, it's important to accept help — so that this crucial phase is done right.

- Make sure your volunteer crew has a thorough debriefing session with each opening team.
- If people involved with the club-opening event have put off work and family obligations, consider recruiting a couple of new people from the sponsoring club to help with follow-up efforts.
- At the end of the final day of the event, have your clean-up crew help the club-opening team review the member prospect information cards for any follow-up needs.
- Consider writing a short, handwritten note to those who have joined and/or filled out applications.
- If you can't circle back with prospects right away, stay in touch through periodic emails. Share the status of the new club's recruitment efforts, any upcoming service projects and any Kiwanis International or district news.

Afterward, it's time for the club opener to do the paperwork for the new club to become official. These required documents include:

- **The New Club Sheet** should be emailed or submitted through the Club Opening Tracker. Member Services will type up a New Club Sheet for the new club once they receive an email that it has been submitted through the tool. Some club openers are doing both, emailing the sheet and processing it through the tool.
- **The Charter Roster** can be emailed, mailed or processed through the Club Opening Tracker. Member Services receives an email when it is submitted through the tracker.
- **The Club Bylaws & Policies** can be emailed or mailed to Member Services.
- **The Chartering Fees** may be paid by sending a check(s), money order, or credit card to member Services.



THANKS!

We appreciate all of the work you do for Kiwanis clubs — and for Kiwanis International. We're here for you if you have questions or ideas. Just contact your district membership coordinator and/or your Kiwanis International area director.



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