

**Beyond Younger Volunteers: What Rural Friends Groups Need to Thrive**  
**Friends of Libraries Section/New York Library Association**  
[www.nyla.org/friends](http://www.nyla.org/friends)

Topic – Potential Challenge Area	Activities to Survive and Maintain the Group <i><b>We are healthy!</b></i>	Activities for Group to Thrive <i><b>We are getting stronger!</b></i>
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership forms available and up-to-date</li> <li>• Include membership information on library’s website</li> <li>• Monitor participation rate* in community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured membership plan exists, working to increase participation rate*</li> <li>• Regularly scheduled membership drives</li> <li>• Outreach activities in community, including use of social media</li> <li>• Systematic recognition of volunteers, showing appreciation for work and involvement</li> </ul>
Diversity and Younger Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a welcoming atmosphere for new members</li> <li>• Extend personal invitations to attract new faces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve multi-generational volunteers</li> <li>• Strive for an inclusive and diverse membership base representative of the community</li> <li>• Offer opportunities for members to interact at social gatherings as well as working together as a team</li> <li>• Friends Steering Committee/Board of Directors actively engages with the community (e.g., involved in business organizations)</li> </ul>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify experienced community leaders to serve</li> <li>• Involve members in decision-making</li> <li>• Create job descriptions for all key positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop succession plan for organization</li> <li>• Highlight leadership opportunities, coaching and mentoring active members to progress to leadership positions</li> <li>• Maintain positive working relationships with library staff and library’s Board of Trustees</li> <li>• Establish written documentation of consistent procedures and practices for the organization</li> </ul>

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Active Participation and Volunteer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership forms include checklist of opportunities for volunteerism</li> <li>• Make commitment to regularly recruit new volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased size of membership and donor base to have larger pool of volunteers to draw upon</li> <li>• Have new volunteers shadow and assist key volunteers to “learn the ropes”</li> <li>• Offer wide variety of projects to involve members with diverse skill sets</li> </ul>
Legal Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain 501(c)(3) status from the IRS <i>if fundraising is the purpose of the organization</i></li> <li>• Compliance with rules and regulations of the IRS, NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, and State Attorney General’s Charities Bureau</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update organization’s by-laws, incorporating requirements for nonprofits (e.g., conflict of interest policy)</li> <li>• Establish a collaborative operating agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) among the library staff, library’s Board of Trustees, and the Friends</li> <li>• Interact and maintain relationship with library’s foundation to recognize the distinct roles of each organization</li> </ul>
Purpose, Mission, and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a clearly defined mission statement</li> <li>• Advocate and network regularly with elected officials on behalf of the library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to raise the public’s awareness of what the Friends do as well as the services of the library</li> <li>• Participate in community events to promote both the Friends and the library they support</li> <li>• Become involved in planning sessions with library staff and the library’s Board of Trustees to support the library’s strategic plan</li> </ul>
Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish consistent and reliable fundraising efforts to provide “extras” for the library</li> <li>• Dues schedule offers a range of options for donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rather than an established tier of dues, provide a range of suggested giving to encourage higher levels of donations</li> <li>• Maintain diverse and unique revenue streams beyond book sale efforts with creative fundraisers</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice “eco-stewardship” with book sale donations and sale remainders to maximize fundraising efforts (e.g., online sales)</li> <li>• Broaden fundraising teams to ensure “buy-in” by more members</li> <li>• Offer members the ability to pay dues online (e.g., PayPal) and accept donations electronically</li> </ul>

**\*Participation rate:** The number of Friends members as a percentage of the population who choose to join the organization. Divide the number of members by the population of the library’s service area. Strive for a rate of 1% or higher. If the library’s service area includes 7,500 residents, 75 Friends members would be a healthy group.

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