

# COUNTY AFFILIATE CREATION SOP

This guide is to be used as a framework for new county affiliates to become established and grow, based on our pool of knowledge gained over the years. Each affiliate has its own personality based on their leaders and make up of their members, so adapt these ideas to fit your unique situation. If you find something that works that is not covered here, please share so others may benefit from your effort.

This SOP will be reviewed annually by the Nebraska SCC. Recommendations for change should be submitted to [Chair@LPNE.org](mailto:Chair@LPNE.org)

## PART I: COUNTY AFFILIATE FORMATION

### Your First Meeting

Thank you for wanting to start a new county affiliate with the Libertarian Party of Nebraska! Along with taking on a new role within your community, this is an opportunity to become involved with libertarians across the state.

Creating an affiliate from the ground up can be a daunting task. Having your first meeting is the hardest step, and if you haven't already, please contact your district coordinator, he or she will help you get started. The second hardest will be to keep those that come interested in coming back. This will require you to create an organization that is focused and gives those attending a sense of purpose.

### What Your First Meeting Might Look Like

Hopefully you have found a group of individuals who believe the same as you do, however this isn't always the case. Some meetings begin with just one or two people and slowly grow from there. This initial meeting is your county affiliate formation meeting. Your goals at your initial meeting will be to:

1. Establish a consistent date/time and place for your meetings. Make it easy to remember such as the first Wednesday of each month or the second Tuesday of the month. Many of our counties meet at places like libraries or a local brewery, some of these places allow them to advertise. Consider this when choosing a meeting place.
2. **Determine your officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer). This is the minimum number of officers required. If you find you need more officers (such as Membership Chair), you can elect as many officers that your affiliate requires.**
3. Choose an affiliate name. Use a county name or area description (such as Lancaster County or Tri-Cities). The full name of your county affiliate must include the word "Libertarian" *i.e.* Lancaster County Libertarian Party or Tri-Cities Libertarian Party
4. Develop your own bylaws: your district coordinator will provide you with generic by-laws which will need to be approved or changed in your next meeting. These will need to be filed with your county election commissioner in order to be recognized by your county. These bylaws should be reviewed and changed as needed.

### Your County Officers

#### County Chair

**Your County Chair has the responsibility for presiding over and facilitating business meetings. The Chair also has the role of affiliate stewardship. Specifically, the Chair ensures that the affiliate meets regularly, sets goals for the county, recruits and welcomes new members into the**

affiliate as well as plans county meetings.

## Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair shares similar responsibilities with the County Chair and takes on the same duties in the absence of chair. For example, the vice-chair will preside over a county meeting if the chair is not present. If the County Chair position is vacant, then the Vice-Chair acts as Chair until a new Chair is elected.

## Secretary

Affiliates need to keep a record of their monthly meeting and this task is performed by the Secretary. Minutes are intended to document the outcome of important decisions, not every word of discussion leading up to the decision.

The Secretary has these primary duties in regards to the Minutes:

1. Call for Agenda items before each meeting.
2. Post Agenda items before each meeting.
3. Take accurate **notes**.
4. Send draft meeting minutes for approval.
5. Distribute the minutes. Minutes can be paper or electronic.
  1. Keep & post the approved minutes of each meeting.
  2. Bring a copy to the next meeting for review and approval. Minutes are not finalized until the membership votes to approve.
  3. If you need to make corrections after you have finalized the minutes, be sure to update the copy in your permanent secretary file.
6. Save a copy of any handouts or reports presented by committees or guest speakers. Include those documents with the corresponding meeting minutes in your permanent files.

Keep in mind these basic rules:

- Be concise and accurate.
- Don't try to summarize discussion or who said what.
- Document major decisions.
  - List the complete wording of each motion, the outcome (approved, defeated, tabled) and the name of the person making the motion,
- Include the name of the speaker and the name of any committee that presents a report, along with a brief (one or two sentences) summary of the report.

To make things easier, it is suggested the Secretary prepare a template file on their computer with the standard headings and major section titles already inserted. Use this blank file to start each new set of minutes.

Meeting minutes may contain the following

- Date, start and end times of meeting
- Called to order by
- Issues or discussion
- Conclusion
- Results of all motions and votes
- Action points/deadlines
- Names of Guest speaker and topic
- Name of secretary who prepared the minutes
- Copies of handouts, etc.

## Treasurer

The County Treasurer is responsible for keeping track of affiliate funds and for reporting the financial status of the affiliate. The Treasurer makes deposits, disburses funds and must be responsible for any financial reporting.

## **County Affiliate Credentials & Request Approval**

Email your bylaws to the Libertarian Party of Nebraska's Secretary (secretary@LPNE.org). The LPNE SCC will vote to approve your affiliate at the next meeting. Your county chair will be informed and provided with additional information to support your affiliate's development.

## **Affiliate Formation Checklist Review**

The following checklist is a guide to help you ensure you have taken the necessary steps in forming an affiliate.

Did you:

- ➔ Choose a name for your affiliate?
- ➔ Elect officers?
- ➔ Develop/approve your bylaws?
- ➔ Pick a time and location for monthly meetings?
- ➔ Submit your affiliate bylaws to the county election commission?
- ➔ Submit affiliate bylaws to the SCC?

## **State Central Committee: Your Local Affiliate and You**

The Libertarian Party of Nebraska, or LPNE for short, is affiliated with the national Libertarian Party, located at 1444 Duke St. Alexandria, VA 22314-3403. In the same manner, county or local Libertarian county affiliates are affiliated with the state party. A new county must apply for affiliation to the State Central Committee, or SCC.

The SCC is the governing body of the LPNE. The Executive Board is composed of the following officers:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- 3 District Coordinators
- Executive Director

The Executive Board is elected at the State convention's Business Meeting held on even numbered years. Their terms are for two years.

As a member of the LPNE, you have a number of channels you can use to voice your opinions or get questions answered. You can participate in your local county meetings and events. Through your participation, you can give your opinions and recommendations to your party officers and your SCC representatives. You can use our message chat or Slack channel to bounce ideas around with our county leadership and SCC members or to get questions answered. You can also speak to your district coordinator, they are our counties' advocates and value the input from our members and encourage dialog. Finally, our SCC meetings are open to anyone interested.

## **National Party, State Party and Local Affiliate Membership**

There is no reciprocal agreement between the National Party and State Party. You must join separately to be a member of each.

# **PART II: GROWING YOUR AFFILIATE**

## Outreach

Most people have never heard of the Libertarian party and many of those who have heard of the party do not have a clear picture of what we stand for. Outreach gets our message out. Participation in events takes long term planning and may require large numbers of volunteers. The type and scope of events is limited to your imagination and the capabilities of your membership.

Events can include, but are not limited to: festivals, parades, (gun, coin, car) shows, fairs, speakers, debates, rallies, etc. The best way to find events is ask your members which events they attend. Then, check out community events for your city, town, county or region on line.

## Event Considerations

- Always understand and follow whatever rules the organization running the event has, including restrictions, as some have specific requirements concerning political parties.
- Make your booth, signs and volunteers look professional
- Have enough outreach materials available
- Don't forget stands, baskets or other containers to display your signs and literature.
- Have a tool box with tape, push pins, string, ties, screwdrivers, pliers, bungee cords, bricks, etc. to make repairs to booths, signs, broken banners or anything else that may get damaged.
- Booths should have a minimum of two volunteers scheduled, preferably three. This allows for breaks, and unexpected situations such as family emergencies or illness. Large booths may require more people.
- Collect contact information from **everyone**.

## Maintaining Meeting Attendance

Libertarian affiliate meetings have to be competitive with all the other ways people have to spend their time. Keeping in mind that our business meetings should be about the business of your county, you can have other casual events or meetings, or have activities planned after your business meeting. Here are some ideas outside of the agenda:

- Invite a guest speaker on a current event, libertarian, campaign, or government topic.
- Bring in a local celebrity, such as a candidate, elected official, or party leader.
- Work on a group activity, like designing affiliate materials or a parade theme or stuffing literature door bags.
- Host a debate between two libertarians with audience questions.
- Ask everyone to bring their favorite Libertarian book, movie, or quote and share why.
- Show a short Libertarian video and hold a roundtable discussion, including a devil's advocate.
- Ask members to finish "I'm a Libertarian because...", then move on to tougher Libertarian questions. Have a time limit to write each answer.
- Plan the next year's activism.
- Discuss the legislature's recent decisions or upcoming city council issues.

## Welcome Newcomers

- Designate a greeter
- Provide your County's Welcome Package
  - Welcome Package can include:

- A welcome letter from your County Chair
- County Affililate and/or LPNE brochures
- Business card
- Social media, internet and contact information
- Candidate Information
- Magnets or stickers with the affiliate's name

## Finance

Money to start your affiliate will likely come from dues or voluntary contributions. Carefully select a responsible member as your Treasurer. This should be someone willing to serve long term and who will keep an accurate record of funds and expenditures. At some point you will need to open a bank account.

Make a realistic budget. This should support the short and long term goals you established. Establish a financial plan to raise the money you need for the first year.

Initially purchase only items you really need and in small quantities. Your first priority for funds is to advertise your existence: social media/ web presence, business cards and small handouts.

As you grow you will need additional funds for affiliate outreach materials, libertarian party brochures, event fees (parades, festivals and shows), banners, signs, booth supplies, etc.

If additional funds are needed, consider holding a fundraiser. This can be as simple as a bake sale, raffle or selling affiliate t-shirts, or as sophisticated as setting up an E-store.

## Setting Up a Bank Account

Please do not consider this legal advice.

To open up a bank account, banks require the prospective account holder's social security number or another government-issued identity number. Instead of using a member's Social Security Number, you should use a Federal Employer's Identification Number (FEIN). This allows the affiliate to move forward when the Treasurer and Chair inevitably change.

Download form SS-4 from the IRS. Use it to apply for your FEIN. Your classification should be Other - Tax Exempt Political Organization.

When you get your FEIN, the Chair and Treasurer should go to the bank and open a regular checking account. The best option is a FREE checking account that pays no interest. That way you have no outside income to account for, and your dues and donations will not be chipped away by fees.

**Do not make expenditures to candidates or issues, only operating expenses of the affiliate. If you, as an affiliate, want to support a candidate or cause, form a separate political committee as provided by Nebraska or Federal law.**

## Affiliate Meeting Location

Locations are based on personal preference, availability and convenience and are selected by consensus of the group. Locations change as necessary.

Most affiliates hold meetings at local businesses, which usually serve food or food & libation and have a separate back or private room. Consider future growth and capacity for special events when choosing your location. The location should be easy to find, easily accessible, in a safe area, have plenty of parking and within easy travel distance for everyone.

## Making a Successful Meeting

The following are suggestions for successful meetings:

- Make sure you meetings are well publicized

- Put up flyers if permitted by your location
- Make Facebook events and posts- and **share** them
- Write postcards to libertarians using your county list to reach new people, the SCC provides them, please ask your district coordinator for some
- Send your information to community calendars
- Smaller towns may even come out to cover your new affiliate, use the letter to the editor or “tips” features of your local papers
- Have written agendas to hand out to everyone, make sure you bring extra pens as well
- Don't let the business meeting drag on
- Utilize business, education and social aspects, but make sure the social part is outside of the business meeting
- Create affiliate goals such as
  - Finding candidates to run
  - Finding volunteer opportunities
  - Planning events to attend
  - Plans to testify for or against upcoming legislation
- Overall, make sure you balance the seriousness of liberty with fun!

## **Agenda Items Should Include**

- Call to order & welcome
- Introductions & welcome of new members/visitors/guest speaker
- Approval of minutes from the last meeting
- Officer and committee reports
- Future events/save the date
- Next meeting schedule
- Close with an invitation to participate in educational or social activities after

## **Other Considerations for a Successful Meeting**

- Have a greeter
- Have a sign-in sheet for attendance & new member/ visitor contact information.
- Have a welcome packet for new members and visitors
- Have a program to follow up with new members and visitors
- Educational segment - talk on selected topic, guest speaker, debate, or local issues discussion. Be inventive and keep it interesting!
- Leadership teams should hold planning meetings between/before monthly meetings to present completed proposals for discussion or votes
- The most widely used format for meeting structure is Robert's Rules of Order
- Partner with nearby affiliates: join forces for events or volunteering, share your experiences and new ideas, be supportive of new counties by boosting their attendance.
- Talk to the wait staff ahead of time and tell them that you will have new members that will ask for the Libertarian Party meeting, explain to speak to staff in the event posts, as well as where your room is located.
- Wear Hats, buttons, t shirts that say “Libertarian” at your meetings so people know you are there.

## **Demographics**

Demographics are characteristics of a given population. Characteristics for our purposes include,

rural or suburban; age groups; general work descriptions, such as heavy industry, office work or agricultural, etc. Study and know your area because understanding your demographics is key in terms of building your affiliate.

When thinking of demographics, ask: is your area mostly rural, mostly suburban or a combination of both? Is there a large employer or many large employers? If there is industry, is it heavy, light or mostly service industry? What age groups are predominant? Where are they located? Is there a college or university?

Some county web pages will give you a breakdown of election results for previous elections and may include additional voter information. Start there and explore. How many votes does it take to win a local election? A useful website to understand demographics in your area is published by the U.S. Census bureau which can be accessed here:

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

Here are some general characteristics for rural and suburban areas:

#### Rural Areas

- More conservative and aging population
- Social media less effective: more personal groups
- More likely to be identified with a specific political party
- Part of existing social networks: church, 4H or Lions

#### Suburban Areas

- More mobile population
- Less reliance on social groups. May not know many or any of their neighbors
- Large numbers of people in a small area so walking your neighborhood possible

## Marketing & Communications

### Digital Tools and Organization

#### Email Accounts

- Choose a name that reflects your affiliate for example:
  - Affiliate Name: Libertarian Party of Smith County
  - Email Address: lpsmithcounty@gmail.com; OR smithcountylp@gmail.com;

#### File Sharing

- Organize your reports and files in a central location.

## Digital Marketing

#### Facebook

The most effective Social Media outlet is Facebook. This should be set up immediately when creating your new affiliate.

- Use the @ feature for easier searches and watermarking original content. Example: Lancaster County Libertarian Party can also be found by typing @LancasterCountyLP
- For every event or meeting, create a Facebook event to engage your followers:
  - Make sure your cover art has text that supports the information within the event itself
  - Make sure you have your officials mark going to increase the reach of the event
- Tips and Tricks
  - Post pictures from meetings, outings, or events, thank people for attending.

- Share relevant news articles.
- Create memes, make sure you put a mark on it that indicates it's from your page.
- Respond to messages, posts, and comments on your page in a professional manner. Try to avoid back and forth arguments, and **never** get personal.
- Local topics are a must: engage people about future city council decisions or congratulate a local team.
- Pay to boost a post
  - Try to be as specific as possible. An audience who likes the Libertarian Party and is in a 25 mile radius, will reach more relevant people to your affiliate, rather than trying to reach all of Nebraska.
- Post Scheduling
  - Facebook allows you to schedule the post for a later date
  - Facebook Publishing Tool allows you to edit posts and save unpublished drafts in addition to scheduling the posts
- Want to post the same thing on multiple accounts? Use Buffer to manage up to 3 social media accounts for free at once
- Use Facebook Insights to view your page progress and growth
- NOTE: Desktop view has more information than the mobile view

## Websites

Create a free drag and drop website with Wix, Weebly, or Wordpress. NOTE: Your Facebook page should be running and active before you create a website. Facebook will reach more people.

## Email Marketing

- Have a list of emails from meetings or events? Use an email marketing tool to schedule emails to keep people informed of upcoming events or latest news.
- Mailchimp is free up to 2,000 subscribers

## Designing and Branding

Want to create fun Social Media Graphics? You can use online tools to create cover photos, event photos, memes, etc. Canva.com has a variety of premade templates for various occasions and social media sites. Pablo.buffer.com is useful as well.

You can use any pictures part of the public domain (CC0 License) without attribution. **DO NOT just download and post pictures from Google or Wikipedia. You could be liable for copyright infringement. Always check what license is associated with the picture before using them.**

- Free pictures part of the public domain and require no attribution: pixabay.com
- Free pictures that require attribution: <https://www.freepik.com/>
- Take pictures of local areas to make your page uniquely yours

## Branding

Many of our counties have made their own brand to distinguish themselves from other counties. It is best to base it on the official LP branding, and go from there.

- Here is a good site to access LP logos <https://lpaction.org/branding/>
- Fonts:
  - Professional - Lora
  - Secondary - Roboto



- Rarely - Journal
- Colors:
  - Libertarian Gold: RGB = 230 / 197 / 0 HEX = #E5C601
  - Libertarian Gray: RGB = 86 / 86 / 90 HEX = #56565a

## Communication

With today's variety of communication means, there is no reason anyone should miss notification of a meeting or event. Keep in mind there may be some members who do not have access to all these. **Try to find one digital forum to communicate with each other.**

- Group chats are the main way the LPNE leadership interacts
- E-mail – Primary means of communication; excellent for advanced notices; make a distribution list to save time
- Texting – Great for small groups like your leadership team or committees
- Phone – Good for emergencies; reduces risk of misinterpretation
- Virtual meetings – Saves travel time; when scheduling an in-person meeting is not practical
- Mail – Personal touch; initial welcome or membership
- Web page – Keep current; new content regularly; make sure it is accurate. Find an experienced web master.
- Social media – Use as many sites as you can; update constantly; trust this to someone who can make it look professional

## Affiliate Development Plan Checklist

Forming a strong core group:

- ➔ Do officers make every meeting?
- ➔ Do you have members who make most meetings?
- ➔ Do you keep attendance?
- ➔ Have you set short and long-term goals?

Building your affiliate:

- ➔ Do you have a social media presence?
- ➔ How often is it updated?
- ➔ Do you take and post pictures of your events?
- ➔ Do you advertise your events on social media?
- ➔ Do you comment on current events from a Libertarian perspective?
- ➔ Do you use snapchat, twitter, Facebook, Instagram?
- ➔ Do you have a website where you discuss Libertarian ideas?

Communication:

- ➔ Have you a communication plan?
- ➔ Do you advertise in every way possible?
- ➔ Does your group have an email address for inquiry?
- ➔ Do you have a business card?
- ➔ Do you have a banner?

Finance:

- ➔ Have we opened a bank account?
- ➔ Do you collect donations at meetings?

- ➔ Have you considered a fund raiser?

#### Outreach:

- ➔ Do you go to events like gun shows and fairs?
- ➔ Do you march in parades?
- ➔ Do you speak at high schools and colleges?

#### Local Involvement:

- ➔ Do you have local issues to get involved in?
- ➔ Have you shown them you are active?
- ➔ Do you volunteer and publicize participation in events such as food or charity drives?
- ➔ Do you attend local government meetings?
- ➔ Do you get involved in local politics by supporting governance by libertarian principles?

## Common Challenges and How to Combat Them

### Attracting New Members

Attracting new members to your affiliate can be done in a variety of different ways.

Your county election office lists names of registered voters that you have free access to once per year. Each county does this differently, it can be on a cd, a printed list or an email. You can write postcards to people on the list to inform them of your new affiliate and the events you have scheduled, as well as a suggestion to follow your facebook page.

Outreach events are another way to let people know of the affiliate's existence. Try to have an affiliate business card or flyer to hand out to let folks know when your affiliate meets and how to get more information on your affiliate. Handing out flyers at parades and festivals is an easy and fun way to get the word out.

Keep affiliate meetings open to everyone and make everyone feel welcome. The most dynamic and robust affiliates are those that have members from all age groups, ethnic backgrounds, professions, etc. Encourage people to bring their friends and spouses.

### Retaining Members

Possibly one of the biggest challenges faced by many affiliates is retaining members. There is no definitive solution to combat this challenge but here are some suggestions on how to keep your members coming back.

How a new member is initially treated when he/she first has contact with the affiliate can make a big difference. To make any new member feel welcome and valued, a personal follow up from the Chair or Vice-Chair is key. This could be with a phone call or introducing yourself after the county meeting. Also, consider handing out a "welcome kit" which can include educational material about the LP as well as more information about your affiliate.

*It cannot be overstated enough that personally following up with a new member, either by phone, mail, or email is an important extension of outreach to prospective/new members. Thank him or her for attending a meeting and keep the line of communication open for feedback and questions.*

Keep members engaged and to ensure that they feel like an important part of the affiliate. Encourage participation from **all** members. Ask for feedback and try to provide volunteer opportunities that consider all skill levels. Furthermore, do not forget that the efforts and time put into the affiliate from its members are volunteer based. Thank your affiliate members for their time and recognize their work.

Having people on committees like an event committee or a social media committee can also keep members coming back. Most people want to feel they are doing something, the trick is to find

what they enjoy and how much time they can put into it.

## Sharing the Workload

Balance the workload and responsibilities in the affiliate to more than one member or officer. One person cannot take on and shoulder the burden of all tasks. Encourage people to ask for help and to speak up. People can easily experience burn out if they take on too much.

## Helpful Resources

- <https://www.lpne.org/>
- <https://www.lp.org/>
- [lpaction.org/7-point-checklist-for-success](http://lpaction.org/7-point-checklist-for-success)
- <https://lpaction.org/branding/>
- <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>
- *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* by Henry M. Robert III and Thomas J. Balch (Da Capo Press, 2011).
- [DC1@LPNE.org](mailto:DC1@LPNE.org)
- [DC2@LPNE.org](mailto:DC2@LPNE.org)
- [DC3@LPNE.org](mailto:DC3@LPNE.org)
- [Chair@LPNE.org](mailto:Chair@LPNE.org)