

# **WVFW**

**NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.®**

## **POST DEVELOPMENT GUIDE**

A guide for improving Post membership through recruiting, retention, mentoring, and engagement

Revised April 2024

# NOTES

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
VFW Post Evaluation	5
How To Correct Deficiencies	6
Membership Recruiting and Retention	7
Potential Community Resources & Opportunities	8
Definition of Community Service	9
Meetings	10
Ideas To Improve Your Post Your Auxiliary Outreach In Your Community Reach Out To Other Posts	12
Online Membership Tools	14
Post Officer Responsibilities	16
Ordering Materials Online	18
Resources	19

## - Introduction -

### Topics that will be covered in detail within this document:

- ◇ How to determine if a current Post in your Department or District needs attention or improvement
- ◇ Reaching out to your District and Department leadership for assistance
- ◇ Mentoring the officers and comrades in a Post
- ◇ Methods to increase recruiting and reconnect with your community
- ◇ How to find recruiting hotspots in your community
- ◇ How to find potential members using your Unpaid/Expiring list and the Relocated/Member-at-Large lists available through your Department
- ◇ The importance of Community Service
- ◇ Ways to make your Post more accessible and welcome to veterans as well as their families
- ◇ Outreach ideas to help veterans in your community
- ◇ Partnering up with other Posts and sharing resources
- ◇ Resources available online through National Headquarters

*FOR ADDITIONAL MEMBERSHIP MATERIALS TO ASSIST WITH POST DEVELOPMENT OR REVITALIZATION, RETENTION, AND RECRUITING, CONTACT:*

**VFW NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP DEPARTMENT**  
**1 – 888 – JOIN – VFW**  
**membership@vfw.org**

## - VFW Post Evaluation -

### 1: Community Service

- Has the Post conducted community service events in the past year? YES / NO
- Has the Post reported community service events in the past year? YES / NO

### 2: Post Meetings

- Does the Post have a set location for monthly meetings? YES / NO
- In the past year, has the Post had enough members present for a quorum for at least nine (9) meetings? YES / NO

### 3: Membership

- Has the Post held at least two recruiting events in the past year? YES / NO
- Has the Post recruited at least one new member in the past year? YES / NO
- Has the Post shown growth above 100% in the past year? YES / NO
- Has the Post increased in Life Membership since last year? YES / NO

### 4: Relief Fund

- In the past year has the Post used the Relief Fund to help a veteran in need? YES / NO
- Has the Post held a fundraiser for the Relief Fund in the past year? YES / NO

### 5: Participation

- Do Post members volunteer to help with Post functions and events? YES / NO
- Does your Post involve the Auxiliary in Post functions? YES / NO
- Does the Post participate in VFW Programs such as Patriots Pen/Voice of Democracy or Teacher of the Year? YES / NO

### 6: Post Operations

- Does the Post have current and up-to-date bylaws? YES / NO
- Are all required documents on file? (refer to Post Inspection Form) YES / NO
- Do the trustees of the Post audit the books of the Quartermaster each quarter? YES / NO
- Does the Post have a House Committee to handle relevant issues? YES / NO

Count the number of YES responses and refer to the table below.

0-7	Needs immediate action
8-12	Immediate mentorship
13-14	Address areas that need improvement
15-17	Excellent VFW Post

The purpose of this evaluation is to indicate how a VFW Post is contributing to community operations. This would identify the potential for the VFW Post to fulfill a useful function, whether it would be an organization that has the potential for attracting membership, and whether it would be recognized as an asset.

Posts that need improvement, mentoring, or immediate action are usually those that are deficient in at least one aspect of the VFW mission. Proper direction is needed to get these Posts back on track.

## **- How to correct deficiencies -**

The evaluation results will give you an idea of the areas where the Post could use improvement and training. We will go over some methods on how this training can be conducted, as well as mentoring the Post officers in correcting any deficiencies. Department leadership can also provide direct assistance during this process.

### **Mentoring**

Many times problems with a Post can be directly attributed to poor leadership training. If Post officers are not knowledgeable about the responsibilities they have volunteered for, including familiarity with VFW Bylaws, Programs, the basics of recruiting and retention, and accurate record-keeping, a Post is headed for failure.

Utilize the expertise of past successful leadership, as well as your District and Department training and Schools of Instruction. Ensure that all leaders are equipped to handle the expectations of the position.

### **Guidelines/Deadlines**

Set achievable goals for the post that you are trying to rejuvenate. Things that need to be corrected cannot be done overnight. Have a clear timeline for correcting deficiencies and improving membership. Make sure that proper training and guidance is provided to assist the Post through this process.

### **Consolidations**

In the event that a Post cannot correct deficiencies, continues to decline in membership, and is unable to fulfill basic VFW program requirements, it may be time to consider a Post consolidation in accordance with Section 209 of the VFW Bylaws. Consolidating two Posts is always preferable to when a Post inevitably folds and surrenders their charter.

## - Membership Recruiting and Retention -

A Post needs to be active in order to attract new members and to retain the members currently on the roster. Posts who ignore community service and other programs do little to shed outdated perceptions of the VFW as a closed-off group of veterans, and does little to give veterans a reason to get involved.

Getting out in your community and doing membership drives is a great way to bring exposure to your post. Research your community to try to find festivals where you can set a membership booth up at. Patriotic celebrations are of course a chance to increase the Post's visibility, but also look into other social events in your area.

See what veteran events are planned by the city or county that your post is in. Get in touch with your local leaders and participate. Work with the other veterans' organizations in your community to plan events. Consider reaching out to your local Chamber of Commerce to possibly cooperate with veteran-owned businesses to spread the word about the VFW and what your Post is doing locally.

Mentor the new members that you recruit. Make sure you are communicating to them the events going on at the Post, community service events that the Post is doing and any changes in VA benefits that they may be eligible for.

Retaining the members you already have is very important. The Post Quartermaster has the ability to view a list of members whose dues are about to expire and those who have let their membership lapse. Communicate with those members to let them know why their membership is important.

## - Potential Community Resources and Opportunities -

Reaching out to the local community is a requirement for successful recruiting. Veterans will not approach the VFW if they are not aware of what the Post is doing in their community.

Consider advertising your Post activities locally. Many publications will promote community service activities for little or no charge.

- ◇ Local newspaper or radio stations
- ◇ Public bulletin boards
- ◇ Use the Chamber of Commerce to identify businesses likely to be frequented by veterans and their families
- ◇ Social media, especially neighborhood and community pages

Be on the lookout for events where your Post should have a presence, either with a recruiting booth, service officers, and/or comrades who can speak about what the VFW does for our nation's veterans.

- ◇ Patriotic events and celebrations
- ◇ Public meetings
- ◇ Trade shows and conventions
- ◇ Job fairs
- ◇ County or state fairs
- ◇ Sporting events
- ◇ Public gatherings, such as holidays and festivals

Ask your members to provide prospects; every member is likely to know at least one fellow veteran who is eligible to join the VFW but has not yet taken that step. Ask your membership where they often spend their time, because where you find one veteran you are likely to find more.

Reach out to your Department Quartermaster for assistance. They can provide lists of members-at-large in your community who may be looking for a Post to call home. Contact these comrades and invite them to transfer into your Post. The Department can also provide prospect lists of Unpaid and Relocated members in your area that you can contact and invite into your Post.



## - Definition of Community Service -

The National Community Service Trust Act defines community service: “encompasses any human act serving the common good; in the interest of the community.” Community service is further defined as “a service that is performed for the benefit of the public or its institutions.”

Since 1899, community service has been a cornerstone of the VFW and reporting the millions of hours our members spend each year is important. It not only helps us ensure proper recognition for our members, but it helps showcase to the public our hard work and dedication.

### Examples of community service

- ◇ Assisting of veterans within the community
- ◇ Scholarships to youth
- ◇ Sponsoring of youth teams
- ◇ VA hospital work on behalf of the VFW
- ◇ Blood drives
- ◇ Legislative town halls
- ◇ Care packages for troops, homeless etc.
- ◇ Register to Vote campaigns
- ◇ Food Bank support
- ◇ Building of ramps for disabled veterans
- ◇ Hosting job fairs
- ◇ Visiting VA Homes & nursing facilities
- ◇ Community Clean Up activities
- ◇ Natural Disaster Relief support
- ◇ Clothing Drives
- ◇ Donations to civic organizations within the community

## - Meetings -

Getting comrades to attend meetings can be a difficult challenge. It is often typical at most Posts throughout the year to have a rise and fall in attendance. In the summer, people vacation and during the holidays they are swarmed with family and work-related events that may keep them from attending. There are several factors to consider in boosting the attendance of Post meetings.

*Are your meeting times facilitating the needs of your members?*

If your meetings start early, maybe the members that might want to attend can't be due to their work and family schedules. Consider maybe making your meeting an hour later. To make these changes all it takes is a simple letter to the Department Commander requesting authorization to make this change. Another avenue to consider is adding online meeting applications such as Zoom or Teams. There are many options out there that are free or very low cost, and they have security measures in place so that outsiders cannot attend.

*Are Post meetings direct and to the point?*

Remember that attending Post meetings is an investment of a member's time. Many members will not come to Post meetings if they don't feel like anything is being accomplished. Having a concise meeting agenda is one way to concentrate on the business that needs to be taken care of. Having monthly staff meetings with your immediate line officers also helps make meetings run smoother if you can identify problems and come up with resolutions beforehand.

Educate members at the meeting on the VFW. Some members sign up and don't know what the VFW does. Meetings are a great opportunity to take time to educate members. Take the time during meetings to explain the programs that we do, like Patriots Pen, Voice of Democracy, and the Teachers Award. Let them know what the Buddy Poppy is and why we distribute them. Explain why our membership is important, discuss legislative victories, what services are available to them to file VA claims and most important, without growing membership each year the survivability of the post.

Have control of your meetings, you are given a gavel for a reason. Use it. The use of the gavel avoids crosstalk, people talking over each other and is the Commanders way to restore order in a meeting.

Rehearse meeting scripts ahead of time and use the order of business to keep your meetings on point. This works well for new commanders as watching meetings is different than running them. You can either use the Order of Business-Traditional or Contemporary.

*Do members know what goes on at the meetings?*

Communication is another element of success for Post meetings. Consistent emails to members reminding them of meetings and Post events may bolster attendance. Using social media and making your meeting an event may also help as well. Text messages and phone calls are other ways to reach members who don't have emails.

Make sure that members who cannot attend meetings are aware of what goes on. Let them know that their membership is still important to the Post even if they are unable to take a direct hand in meetings.

*Is your meeting location known and easily accessible?*

Ensure that your Post meets in a location that all our members can get to and access without difficulty. If your members have to jump through hoops to get to the meeting, they may find reasons not to attend.

As a veterans organization, we must ensure our facilities are accessible to members and guests who may have mobility issues. It is an unpardonable insult to turn a comrade away from a Post meeting because they cannot get their wheelchair up the steps to your meeting location, or for our members to deal with other barriers to access.

If your membership is spread out over a large area, consider also using online video streaming of your meetings, as long as it is done in accordance with VFW Bylaws, Manual of Procedure, and guidelines.

## **- Ideas To Improve Your Post -**

It is always said that a VFW Post is the members, not the building. However, if you have a Post home, it must be a place where veterans can feel comfortable and welcome.

First and foremost, you must ensure that your Post home operates in accordance with all local and state laws and regulations. Consult with your District leadership if you need assistance with permits, regulations, and the like.

Some useful suggestions:

- ◇ Make sure that veterans of all generations are represented and welcome at your Post.
- ◇ Ensure that your Post is accessible to veterans and guests who may have mobility issues or disabilities.
- ◇ Run a tight ship. Make sure that your Post is clean and organized, a place where a veteran can be proud to walk into with their family.
- ◇ Show your pride! Flags, banners, and other VFW items can be purchased through the VFW Store at [vfwstore.org](http://vfwstore.org).
- ◇ Be open to making changes if necessary to make your Post more welcoming and family-friendly. Take stock of images or posters you might have on display, the appropriateness of music or entertainment, and the attitude and professionalism of your staff or employees.
- ◇ Consider adopting a no-smoking policy.

## **- Your Auxiliary -**

If your Post has an Auxiliary chapter, make sure to use them! Remember that we work alongside our brothers and sisters in the Auxiliary; they are not subordinates or competitors. Both the VFW and the Auxiliary have the same goals and working side by side can be an invincible force for our veterans!

If your Post does not have an Auxiliary, look into potentially establishing a chapter to get family members and more of the community involved with the Post!

## **- Outreach In Your Community -**

Make sure that potential members know about what the Veterans of Foreign Wars is about, and the services we provide:

- ◇ Accredited service officers to assist free of charge with VA claims and benefits.
- ◇ Educational programs like the Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen competitions that provide youth scholarships, or the Sport Clips Help A Hero scholarship to assist veterans with continuing education
- ◇ Lobbying in Washington DC and your state and local legislature on behalf of veterans to ensure our benefits are kept strong
- ◇ Ensuring our legacy by remembering and honoring those who have come before us through memorials, funeral details, and honor guards
- ◇ The camaraderie that can only come from a group of veterans sharing the common bond of service in a foreign conflict

To learn more about specific membership benefits including discounts at participating businesses, visit: [vfw.org/join/member-benefits](http://vfw.org/join/member-benefits)

## **- Reach Out To Other Posts -**

Remember that we are not in competition with our fellow VFW Posts. When we help each other succeed, we all benefit. Don't be afraid to contact other Posts in your District or Department that have shown success in membership growth, program participation, veterans service, and community service.

## - Online Membership Tools -

The Online Membership System (OMS) is a set of tools available to all VFW members through the vfw.org website. If you need assistance logging into the VFW website, contact our Member Service Center at 833.839.8387.

### All VFW Members

- ◇ Renew or Upgrade your membership
- ◇ Update your personal contact information
- ◇ Request a duplicate membership card
- ◇ Download a digital version of your card
- ◇ Set up a payment profile
- ◇ View your personal recruiter report
- ◇ Register for the National Convention
- ◇ View our Training & Support materials
- ◇ Order membership recruiting materials
- ◇ Visit the online VFW Store
- ◇ Learn about Member Benefits
- ◇ Donate to the VFW
- ◇ Contact a certified Veterans Service Officer in your area
- ◇ Access Memstats (Membership Statistics)
- ◇ Read online issues of the VFW Magazine

### Post Commander additional tools

- ◇ View your Post Roster
- ◇ View a list of Legacy Life members in your Post
- ◇ View a list of Lapsed/Unpaid members in your Post
- ◇ View a list of New Member Prospects

### Post Quartermaster additional tools

- ◇ View your Post Roster
- ◇ View a list of Legacy Life members in your Post
- ◇ View a list of Lapsed/Unpaid members in your Post
- ◇ View and process New Member Prospects
- ◇ Process applications for New members of your Post
- ◇ Renew, Transfer, and Decease members of your Post
- ◇ Request a duplicate card for a member
- ◇ Update a member's contact information
- ◇ Enroll members in the Legacy Life program

- ◇ View your updated Monthly Maintenance Journal
- ◇ Track payouts to the Post for Annual, Life, and Legacy members
- ◇ File your Post Election Report

### **District Commander additional tools**

- ◇ View rosters of Posts in your District
- ◇ View a list of Legacy Life members in your District
- ◇ View a list of Unpaid/Expiring officers in your District
- ◇ File District and Post Election Reports

### **Department Commander additional tools**

- ◇ View Post Officer lists, including term lengths, vacancies, and unpaid/ expiring officers.
- ◇ View a list of Posts with no Election Reports
- ◇ View recruiter reports for your Department
- ◇ View rosters of Posts in your Department
- ◇ View a list of Legacy Life members in your Department
- ◇ View a list of Unpaid, Department-at-Large, and Relocated members in your Department
- ◇ File Post, District, or Department Election Reports

### **Department Quartermaster additional tools**

- ◇ Submit IT Requests
- ◇ View and process New Member Prospects for your Department
- ◇ View Post Officer lists, including term lengths, vacancies, and unpaid/ expiring officers.
- ◇ View a list of Posts with no Election Reports
- ◇ View recruiter reports for your Department
- ◇ View rosters of Posts in your Department
- ◇ View a list of Legacy Life members in your Department
- ◇ View a list of Unpaid, Department-at-Large, and Relocated members in your Department
- ◇ File Post, District, or Department Election Reports
- ◇ Process, Renew, Transfer, and Decease members in your Department
- ◇ View Accounting Reports for your Department

## - Post Officer Responsibilities -

A Post needs to have strong leadership in order to thrive, and it is important to know the roles and expectations of all appointed and elected positions. These responsibilities are described in detail in the VFW Manual of Procedure.

**Post Commander:** Responsible for presiding over all Post meetings, ensuring observance of VFW regulations. Ensures all Post business is legal and proper, decides matters of VFW policy and regulation, appoints officers to the Post, approves use of Post funds, ensures monies and reports are properly forwarded to the Department and National Headquarters, and attends all properly called District meetings and Conventions.

It is important to remember that the Commander must be neither a dictator nor a tyrant. They are the elected official chosen by the members to lead the Post.

**Senior Vice Commander:** Assists the Commander with all duties and presides in their absence.

**Junior Vice Commander:** Assists the Commander and Senior Vice Commander with their duties and presides in their absence.

**Quartermaster:** Is bonded in accordance with the VFW Bylaws, collects monies due to the Post and takes charge of Post funds, disburse Post funds in a proper manner, receives and processes membership dues, reconciles financial reports for the Post and provides such reports to Post trustees for regular audits, files appropriate financial forms to government agencies as appropriate.

**Adjutant:** Handles official Post correspondence, maintains books and records (including copies of all member application, minutes of Post meetings, and all current orders) and maintains a copy of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.



Chaplain: Handles opening and closing prayers of all Post meetings  
Post Officer Responsibilities

Judge Advocate: directs Commander in all legal matters.

Surgeon: coordinates visitation and care of hospitalized members or those veterans in nursing homes.

Officer of the Day: verifies all members are entitled to remain during a Post meeting.

Trustees: review Quartermasters report on a monthly basis, conducts quarterly audits of the Post reports and property. Trustees may not hold any other elected position or positions that they would audit as trustee.

Service Officer: assist members of the Post and their family with obtaining rightful entitlements from State and Federal agencies, in accordance with VFW Guide for Service Officers.

It is imperative that the Post's officers do not form a clique or "echo chamber" where theirs become the only voices that are heard. Members who feel their contributions are not valued because they are not part of the "good ol' boys' club" are likely to drift away from the Post and feel that their membership is not valued.

Remember that every Post officer has volunteered to serve, and these positions come with an expectation of responsibility. Everyone must work together in order for a Post to succeed.

# TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EASY ONLINE ORDERING!

Instead of waiting for your order to be mailed or faxed in, make sure your Post gets the materials you need quickly and efficiently by ordering your materials online!

**Just follow these steps!**



1) Go to [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) and click the “LOGIN” link in the upper right corner. Sign in when prompted.

*If you have not yet created an account on the website, follow the “Sign Up With TroopID” link to do so!*

2) Under “Membership Quick Links”, select the Online Membership System (OMS) option.

3) On the left side of the page, you will see an option for Membership Order Form - click that link.

*You’ll see that it automatically enters your mailing information! If you need your materials shipped elsewhere, go ahead and enter the new address. (This won’t affect your address on file in our records)*

4) Use the dropdown list to indicate which items you need. It will automatically calculate the cost of items and shipping. When you’re finished, click SUBMIT and it will take you to a billing page if there are any charges.

Once done, you’ll receive an email confirmation and your order will be processed and sent out!

**IT’S THAT EASY!**

# RESOURCES

## **- Online Resources available through vfw.org -**

- ◇ Update your personal information
- ◇ Renew dues or upgrade to Life/Legacy Membership
- ◇ Online Membership System (OMS)
- ◇ Order Membership materials for your Post
- ◇ VFW Training & Support
- ◇ Up-to-date member benefits
- ◇ VFW Store - visit us at [vfwstore.org](http://vfwstore.org)!
- ◇ Download a digital copy of your membership card
- ◇ Contact your elected officials
- ◇ Volunteer your time
- ◇ Learn about what the VFW is doing for veterans like you!

## **- Contact the National Headquarters -**

- ◇ Membership phone: 888.564.8655 (888-JOIN-VFW)
- ◇ Membership email: [membership@vfw.org](mailto:membership@vfw.org)
- ◇ Membership Department Facebook: [facebook.com/VFWMembership](https://facebook.com/VFWMembership)
  
- ◇ Member Service Center phone: 833.839.8387 (833-VFW-VETS)
- ◇ Member Service Center email: [msc@vfw.org](mailto:msc@vfw.org)
  
- ◇ National Headquarters switchboard: 816.756.3390



**NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.®**

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