**Tips for Building the Federation at the Community Level**

These tips were published on our Facebook page buildthenationalfederationin75days.

Day 1: Tip of the Day  
As you begin planning for the 75 days of action campaign in your area, find out if there are any blindness support groups nearby. If there are, get on the next meeting agenda and talk about the NFB. Make sure they always have up to date information about chapter meetings and events to share with their members. You never know where you will find future members or our next great leader!

Day 2: Tip of the day  
Want to promote your chapter or chapter building event on twitter? Use a hashtag (#). A hashtag (#) is a unique word or phrase that is used to identify your subject matter. If [#s](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/s) are used consistently, you can promote events and topics as well as keep track of who is talking and what they are saying. Our # for 75 Days of Action is [#NFB75in75](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/nfb75in75). Search our # on twitter to see what people are saying about 75 Days of Action. When choosing a #, search it on twitter to make sure people are not already using it to talk about something else. For example [#75in75](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/75in75) was already being used to discuss a college fundraising campaign. To see how a # has been used on a local level, check out [#discoveryou](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/discoveryou). This was the # for a recent seminar in San Francisco! Now choose a hashtag, let people know what it is, and get to tweeting [#simpleaspie](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/simpleaspie). REMEMBER!!! Dictate puts spaces between words in hashtags so you usually have to enter them manually.

Day 3: Tip of the Day  
Do not forget about the folks who were once involved but have stepped away from our local chapters or state affiliates. Whether they stepped away in anger, because they got busy, or because their priorities shifted, we should welcome our old friends back with open arms. Brainstorm with your Federation friends and get in touch with some folks you haven't seen in a while. They may be really glad to hear from you! Reconnecting is a great way to strengthen and build the Federation!

Day 4: Tip of the Day  
Market our programs to build and strengthen chapters! Don't be shy! We offer free white canes, free slates, scholarships, NFB NEWSLINE, the Braille Monitor, Future Reflections, BELL, and other fantastic programs TO REACH BLIND PEOPLE. We are providing services as well as the opportunity to get to know us and our belief that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. When you visit rehab centers, churches, offices of disability services, blindness support groups, and all the other places around town that might know blind people, market our programs. If they do not send blind people directly to us, we may gain access to them indirectly as they utilize the programs and services of the National Federation of the Blind. Building and strengthening our chapters is not something that takes place over a single well-executed meeting or event. Marketing the programs of the National federation of the Blind in the community lays a foundation for partnership and growth for the future.

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Day 5: Tip of the Day  
Are you looking for a place to have your chapter meetings? Check out churches, hospitals, fire stations, banks, restaurants with banquet rooms, libraries, schools, centers for independence, senior communities, apartments with event rooms, universities, and other places in the community where there might be a quiet and free room. Don't give up. You will find someone who is willing to share space for a good cause. There are chapters who meet in each of these types of places mentioned above, as well as many other creative places. Share your interesting chapter meeting location ideas.

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Day 6: Tip of the Day  
  
Transportation to chapter meetings and events can feel like an insurmountable barrier. Don't worry! Every one has similar problems and here are some solutions we have found. Whenever possible, meet in a location that is convenient to available public transit. If there are folks in the chapter who drive, ask them to pick up others along the way. If no one drives, encourage people who live in the same direction to split rides in order to cut down costs. Check with local lions clubs or civic groups to find volunteer drivers, and see about getting a discount from the local cab company on meeting days as the state affiliate is a 501 (c) 3 and it is a tax deductible donation. If several members are clustered in a given area, try to find a meeting location within walking distance so that a large group can walk to the meeting. Do a chapter fundraiser to help offset the cost of transportation for members. These are just a few solutions. If you have any great transit ideas, share them with us!

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Day 7: Tip of the Day

It is always more fun with friends! When new people come to our chapter meetings, we can pair them with a friend or mentor who will guide them through their introduction to the National Federation of the Blind, and our philosophy. A friend can meet you for coffee between meetings, call to remind you about upcoming events, and help spread the love of our extended family network. This is something many chapter members can do willingly and do well, so chapter Presidents, facilitate some friendships and keep people coming back!

Day 8: Tip of the Day

When new members show up to a chapter building or strengthening event, give them a job to keep them coming back. They can be greeters, cookie-makers, phone-callers, information-distributors, refreshment servers, or cleaner-uppers. If the person has a special skill set, you can have them on the agenda to address the chapter. When people feel important and needed, they are much more inclined to come back! Everybody needs a job and there is plenty of work to do in the Federation!

Day 9: Tip of the Day

Extra, extra read all about it. Consider using free media publicity to advertise chapter building events. Community calendars usually like to have announcements at least a month ahead of time. One month before an event, put out an advisory, and 2 weeks before an event, put out a press release. You can re-send the press release a couple days prior to your event as well. This ensures that local media sources have plenty of notice. Consider contacting radio, TV, newspapers, and organizations with newsletters. Ask about PSA's, community calendars, other sponsorships, and other free ways to get press. Remember, media coverage increases our chances of reaching new people!

Day 10: Tip of the Day

Once the horses have been lead to water, we have to provide them with something to drink, and maybe a little snack too. In the words of our Affiliate Building guru Joanne Wilson, "when building or strengthening a chapter you have to have food." Some chapters provide pizza or other lunch type food during the first chapter building/strengthening event. Here are some suggestions for affiliates who may not have as much of a budget. Many bagel shops or bakeries will give away their day old bread. It is still very tasty and can be collected, frozen, and served at chapter strengthening events. Other restaurants might be willing to donate food as well, so it is always good to check. Places like SAMS Club, Costco, and Wal-Mart will donate gift cards that can be used to offset the cost of food and supplies. We have also announced 75 Days mini-grants that are available to chapters on a very limited basis. For more info about the mini-grants that may be available, email 75days@nfb.org. Another option to consider is a chapter potluck. With all of these solutions, there is no reason that participants at an organizing or strengthening event should leave hungry.

Day 11: Tip of the Day

Brag and Drag, a fun chapter activity that can raise a little money! Try it at your chapter building or strengthening event. Barbara Loos, of our Lincoln, Nebraska chapter, and Janine Linebeck, of our Austin, Texas chapter, report that they offer members a unique and fun opportunity to brag about something or complain about something at the end of each chapter meeting. What a fun way to demonstrate the camaraderie of the Federation and educate our members, rookie or veteran, at the same time! At that first chapter meeting, get your leadership team to brag about our BELL program, our new president, Mark Riccobono, or the dynamic National Convention. You could complain about those who oppose the TEACH Act, or pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage. The Brag and Drag segment does not have to be limited to our effort, but it is a great way to spotlight who and what we are in a fun way. Members could brag about their winning baseball team or their new grandbaby. They might complain about traffic, the weather, or YOUR favorite baseball team. Keep it fun, never let it get personal. In the Austin chapter, members have to contribute a buck to brag and two dollars to complain. In Lincoln, they pay a dollar to brag and a dollar to call something "a real drag man". It is a way to raise a couple of dollars while raising the level of Federation awareness.

Day 12: Tip of the Day

If you are wondering about inviting guests who are former or current members of other consumer blindness groups to your chapter building or strengthening event, the answer is YES, BRING THEM! Each of us ultimately chooses to participate in the environment that best suits our needs. Let your new or newly revitalized chapter be a part of an informed choice. Many people avoid the NFB because of myths and misconceptions. We should invite ALL of our blind friends to come find out what we are really about. Their job is to show up, and our job is to love them in!

Day 13: Tip of the day  
Capitalize on strengths! Everyone has them and it takes many different skill sets to build a dynamic chapter. When we celebrate strengths, we inherently minimize weaknesses!

Day 14: Tip of the Day  
Getting people to our meetings is only half the battle. We have to get them to keep coming back. Collecting data can help. Having good contact information allows us to follow up, knowing their talents lets us put them to work, and knowing their interests let's us plan meetings that attract crowds. The newly developed TLC chapter created an online survey that is used to collect this data from members and visitors.

Day 15: Tip of the Day  
  
If there is someone who is worth having in your chapter, but you can't get them to come to a meeting, try to get them to come as a presenter. People like to feel like the expert. Once you have them there, teach them about the benefits of coming back. Not everyone sticks after the first meeting, so try to get them to come to a couple more meetings to "help out" in some way. They don't always have to present. Give them another job they perceive as important to keep them coming back.