

<b>NGFFL Toolkit Module:</b> <b>Recruitment, Registration &amp; Retention</b>	<b>Original Issue Date:</b>  <b>2012</b>	<b>Most Recent Version Issue Date:</b>  <b>06/29/2018</b>
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## **National Gay Flag Football League (NGFFL)**



### **Local League Toolkit**

### **Module IV: Recruitment, Registration & Retention**



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## 1.0 Overview and Purpose

The National Gay Flag Football League (“**NGFFL**”) is committed to proudly fostering community, comradery and inclusivity by providing opportunities to engage in competition through flag football. As part of this vision, the NGFFL has a supporting agenda which includes driving local membership growth and development.

The purpose of the Local League Toolkit (“**Toolkit**”) is to provide lessons learned and resources that can help start or strengthen a local flag football league. Each city and league will be different, but there are common elements that will make this Toolkit useful to local leaders and other stakeholders who organize and run local leagues. This Toolkit is meant to share best practices, examples and lessons learned, all in an attempt to make organization and execution as efficient and as high of quality as possible.

The purpose of this module is to discuss recommended strategies for recruitment of local league players and supporters, registration process for players and retention of players and supporters year over year.

## 2.0 Recruitment

Recruitment efforts focus on spreading the word about your local league and, more importantly, getting people committed to play flag football. It is important to note the difference between **awareness** (passive recruiting efforts, like hanging up a flyer at a local bar or coffee house) and **outreach** (active recruiting efforts, like walking up to someone and asking them if they would like sign up to play).

This same principle applies to your mailing list. Mass emails and text message are great to make people aware, but you have to reach out to people individually to get them committed to play. Your mailing list will help you once you open registration and you plan to form teams.

Some strategies for awareness (passive recruiting efforts) include:

- Local gay media, arts/culture papers, local blog sites, or mainstream publications. Depending on your budget, you can also advertise an upcoming event or the website/email for the league in your local papers or online
- Social Media sites can provide additional information, such as Facebook and Instagram
- Placing fliers at local bars, restaurants or other gay-themed businesses increases visibility of your league

Some strategies for awareness (active recruiting efforts) include:



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- Focus your efforts on those places where you're most likely to engage a lot of prospective players. This can take the form of bar crawls where you visit multiple bars in one night. It's helpful to figure out the best day and time when you can reach out to a crowded bar but also be able to have a brief conversation about the local league.
- You can also visit restaurants, coffee shops or other popular hang outs. If you call ahead to get approval from the owner or manager, this can also provide an opportunity to establish a relationship with a potential local league sponsor.
- Local college LGBT clubs are another way to actively recruit players, and provide a younger audience for your league's events. There may even be high school LGBT support groups or community partners, like PFLAG that would welcome involvement and partnership.
- Another great way to spread the word and identify prospective players is through other local gay sports leagues—basketball, softball, volleyball, swimming and diving, bowling, etc. You can reach out to the commissioners or captains of other local leagues and ask them to forward an email to their list or let you come to one of their social events.
  - You can offer to do the same for them or co-host a social event to cross-promote your leagues. This also provides an opportunity to learn of their schedules to avoid conflicting with their game times. This helps players who may want to play multiple sports and not have to choose between leagues.

Your local board should determine what the goals are for your local league. If it includes outreach to individuals who do not identify as LGBT, your recruitment efforts could include other recreational leagues, non-LGBT focused bars and businesses and other avenues.

It is incumbent upon local board members that the places you visit are representative of the community around you. In other words, if you go to the same bars that only attract one segment of the community you are focused on, then you're going to have a more homogenous group. If you reach out to lesbian bars, straight leagues, bear bars, college intramural teams, military nights, etc., your league will reach a broader cross section of potential players.

Several marketing strategies can be found in Appendix A.

### 3.0 Registration

Once your local league determines your start date, you will want to ensure you open registration far enough in advance to give people time to submit their forms and payment, and then allow an extra week to hold the draft, announce teams, and allow for a practice or two.

A typical schedule will open registration a month before the first game and then close registration after two or three weeks. If you'll be conducting a draft, it is often helpful to have players assess their skills in the registration process—perhaps doing it at the same time they sign the waiver form and code of conduct (*See Toolkit Module III: Tax & Legal Implications*). Players should provide contact information that can be added to a communication list, as well as

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an emergency contact number and any dates that they would be unavailable during the season. All information that captains can leverage when conducting the draft.

If you'll be charging a registration fee, you can either collect payment via cash or check or online (i.e. PayPal account or Square reader for smartphones). One person should be responsible for collecting all registration forms and payment—the local league treasurer or team captain can fill this role easily. For a larger discussion about registration fees, see Module V: Fundraising, Income and Sponsorship.

If possible, you should explore setting up an online registration form which can be done through Google Docs to have all of the fields completed go directly into an online Excel spreadsheet. Other local leagues have used apps such as LeagueApps to provide an online platform for registration.

The board should decide on a standard approach for registration for the local league, addressing what would work best and be most affordable. Retention of waivers, registration forms and proof of payment should be retained for at least the length of the league season.

## 4.0 Retention

Key to any local league growth is sustaining players and support. This can be accomplished through successful execution of the local league season and providing an affordable registration fee, but the best retention strategy is through social activities that support the local league.

Organizing social events before and during the season will help strengthen the sense of community and comradery created through the league. This can be as simple as sending an email with a location and time. Social events during the registration period can also provide an opportunity to answer questions prospective players might have. Keep in mind that people may want to play but are intimidated by the idea or unsure of what the league is about. Having opportunities to interact with league members and leadership off the field prior to the season are key.

Some ideas for social events include sport watching parties (doesn't have to be football), game nights, bowling nights, etc. These can also be combined with fundraisers, such as speed dating events, bachelor auctions, etc. These can also be leveraged to include any league sponsors—such as league night at a sponsoring bar.

Depending upon the goals and resources you lay out, once your local league has had its inaugural season you may be interested in growing the league. An easy way to do this is to ask current players to recommend or directly reach out to their friends who may be interested in playing.

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Some things to consider are the number of fields you can access, the number of captains and quarterbacks in the league, and the number of sponsors or increased costs associated with league expansion.

Additional strategies to retain involvement center around providing non-players (supporters) with opportunities to be involved and be recognized. Consider asking players to invite their friends/family. Consider having a fan appreciation day where you get a sponsor to buy drinks for the team with the most number of fans at the games. Also consider recognizing a Supporter MVP each season. Attracting fans can also help spread the word about the local league and attract new prospective players for future seasons.

Recognition of coaches, players, referees and supporters at a season-end event is also recommended and people always want to feel appreciated. Awards for individual achievement both on and off the fields should be awarded and those recognized. Awards and recognition could also be tied to fundraising goals (*See Toolkit Module V: Fundraising, Income & Sponsorships*).

## 5.0 Revision History

<b>Version</b>	<b>Version Issue Date</b>	<b>Description of Changes:</b>
1	2012	Initial version
2	03/15/2018	Restructured Toolkit into module format and made required edits to content to account for new format; added updated examples
3	06/29/2018	Updated to include best practices shared in the NGFFL City Leaders FB page

## 6.0 Appendices

Appendix A – Sample Marketing Strategies

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## 6.1 Appendix A

### Recruitment and Outreach Strategies

#### Before the event:

1. **Pick a date/time and location** that will give you the ideal number of people to approach. That means there are enough people to have a quick conversation with but not so many that you can't easily move through a crowd. Call ahead to check to make sure it's ok to be there.
2. **Invite volunteers to join you.** Depending on the crowd, you may want to have 4 to 6 volunteers who are comfortable approaching strangers and asking them to sign up. Ideally, you'll have volunteers that match the crowd you are going to (i.e. if you're going to a lesbian bar, don't just have all guy volunteers).
3. **Print and/or buy the materials** you need, including:
  1. Sign-up sheets with first name, last name, email, phone
    1. Tip – fill out the info on the top line – people tend to not complete a column that has not been completed on the line above.
  2. Clipboards ideally with some graphic or poster on the back
    1. Tip – when you approach someone, you can show them something that is appealing to them so they are more likely to talk with you.
  3. Hand-outs with basic info they need i.e. when, where, who to contact, website/email.
    1. Tip – business cards or palm cards can easily be put in a pocket while larger fliers will often get left behind.
  4. Posters to display while you're there and, if allowed, left behind in a high-visibility place.
    1. Tip – Don't have too much text. Make sure you communicate the most important info in a way that can be seen at a distance or with a quick glance.
  5. Stickers are a great way to spread visibility and also track who you've approached.
    1. Tip – Even if someone doesn't want to sign up, you can offer a sticker that they might want to wear for the night, especially if it can be a conversation starter.
  6. Pens and other supplies like tape, scissors, push pins, and markers.
4. **Confirm via phone** with your volunteers and the venue 24 hours before your event.

#### Day of the event:

1. **Confirm once again** with your volunteers. Choose a specific location (i.e. at the second table to the right when you enter) and give your cell number in case they can't find you.
2. **Arrive 15 minutes early** to make sure you're set up in time to train your volunteers. This will allow you to approach the manager or point person to introduce yourself.

#### At the event:

1. **Establish your base.** Pick a location that will allow you to set up your materials. Most likely, you can serve as the volunteer coordinator so they can go into the crowd back

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and come back to you to restock supplies, give you completed sheets, ask detailed questions, etc.

2. **Train your volunteers.** Though you may have some stragglers, once you have a critical mass you can start to train them.
  1. Distribute the materials (a few sign-up sheets, pens, clipboards, hand-outs/info sheets).
    1. Tip – You’ll approach people in groups of two or more so having two clipboards per volunteer can help them sign up people quicker.
  2. Pair up. It’s often easier to approach people in groups of twos.
  3. Goal is to get as many (legible) contacts as possible. They shouldn’t spend 20 minutes talking to one person. An average conversation could take 2 or 3 minutes.
    1. Tip – Make sure they check the writing. If they can’t read it, you probably won’t be able to so have them rewrite any illegible information on the sheet.
  4. Don’t discriminate. For real, just because someone doesn’t look like a football player doesn’t mean they aren’t interested in signing up.
  5. Challenge them. Give them an incentive to make a game of it, i.e. first person/team to fill a sheet gets a round of beer.
  6. (if appropriate) Drink. Don’t get drunk, but alcohol is a great courage booster.
    1. Tip – If you’re doing a bar crawl, you want to be aware of that tipping point in the night when people get too drunk to write clearly. Usually 9:30pm is a good cut-off point.
3. **Coordinate/encourage your volunteers.** If possible, stay put in one location (i.e. at a “resource table”) so they know where to find you once they are done.
4. ***MOST IMPORTANT: Collect the sheets.*** Make clear to all volunteers that they need to get all unused materials – but most importantly the sign-up sheets – back to you at the end of the night.
  1. Tip – Number the sheets and keep them in order so you know which ones are missing.
5. **Thank your volunteers.** You want them to come back so make sure they feel the love.
6. **Make sure they – and you – are having fun.** How often do you get to walk up to people (perhaps some that you think are cute) and ask for their name and contact information? Be safe and have fun.

**After the event:**

1. **Thank your volunteers** the next day so they feel appreciated and want to sign up for another shift. Encourage them with the number of volunteers they signed up.
2. **Thank your venue.** Let them know the success you had and how much you appreciate them letting you do outreach.
3. **Compile your contacts into a spreadsheet or database.** If information is not legible, try searching for them online or using a social networking site like Facebook.
  1. Tip – If you have an email address that you can’t quite make out (i.e. is it smith76 or smith16?) try searching for both in Facebook to see if you can find the person that way.

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4. **Email or call your new contacts.** Within 24 hours you should send an email or call them to give them more information. Individual emails work best to avoid going into spam filters.
  1. Tip – Once you create your spreadsheet, you can do an email “mail merge” in Word to send out individual messages using Excel through an Outlook account if you have one.
5. **Follow up again.** Don’t assume that just because you reached out once that a lack of response is a “no.” Try again. If you emailed once, try calling them.
  1. Tip – Organize a phone banking night with your volunteers a week after your event to call through the lists. This can often dramatically increase your response/sign up rate.