*Whether vaccinated or not, if you’re planning to gather with community members, think about what you can do to help keep yourself and your loved ones safe from COVID-19. Washington Department of Health offers the following guidance in a multitude of languages:*

[*https://coronavirus.wa.gov/information-for/you-and-your-family/safer-gatherings*](https://coronavirus.wa.gov/information-for/you-and-your-family/safer-gatherings)

Once a project is completed or a problem is solved, active members may dwindle away. Many organizations experience this problem, so you need to be creative to avoid this dilemma.

Below are some ideas to retain active members:

1. **Help new members find a place in the group.** Many will offer to help but will not know where to start.
   1. Organize a list of volunteer activities and have those who want to help sign their name next to activities they’d be interested in helping with. This will be a great start for your new members and gives them a reason to continue coming back.
      1. Sample list of volunteer activities:
         1. Event Coordinator
         2. Committee Chair
         3. Meeting Greeter – to welcome new and returning attendees
         4. Outreach and Engagement Lead
         5. Social Media Manager
2. **Always welcome new members and attempt to make them feel at ease with the group.**
   1. Consider the issues/barriers that would prevent people from your community from feeling welcome in your group. Brainstorm and implement ways to reduce those barriers and create a more accessible environment for your community group.
   2. Officers and other members should watch for new faces at each meeting and welcome them.
   3. New or potential members should be introduced to someone who lives near them.
   4. Designate an official greeter at every meeting.
3. **Avoid the appearance of cliques.** New people who see the same people running every project will feel excluded and may not return.
   1. Different people should be appointed to positions of leadership. Consider this when creating your list of volunteer activities. This will help create a sense of belonging.
   2. Delegating tasks and projects to many members ensures that members will take ownership of the organization. The neighborhood group is less likely to lose members if they are interested and actively involved.
4. **Encourage new ideas and input at all levels of the organization.** People who are new in the organization can see things in a new light and provide new solutions to old problems. New perspectives can assist the whole group in problem solving.
   1. When gathering input, keep an open mind and listen to all ideas before making a final decision.
5. **Keep meetings organized and running on time.** Busy people will not attend meetings or involve themselves in organizations they consider to be a waste of time.
   1. Have a written agenda for every meeting and stick to it.
6. **Host meetings on issues that could impact a large portion of residents.** Ask members what they would like to have programs on, discuss, or learn more about.
7. **Maintain current membership records.** Staying in touch with members is essential to a thriving community group. You never know when a project will present challenges that can be solved by a member with a special set of skills.
   1. Keep a secure file with:
      1. members’ names
      2. addresses
      3. phone numbers
      4. special talents
      5. areas of interest
      6. etc.
   2. Do not share member information with anyone outside of the leadership team or within the organization.
8. **Have fun! Being part of a neighborhood group is not all work.** Sponsor parties and celebrations to get to know your neighbors better. Your events should appeal to all, including children. This will foster a strong sense of community spirit among your neighbors.
   1. Check out these programs to help put on a community event in your neighborhood:
      1. [Neighborhood Block Parties](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/permits-and-services/permits/block-parties-and-play-streets) - Apply for a free permit to close a neighborhood street and use the right-of-way to host a party for neighbors
      2. [Play Streets](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/playstreets.htm) - Apply for a free permit to close a neighborhood street to create more space for play and physical activity during the summer or after school
      3. [Neighborhood Matching Fund](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/neighborhood-matching-fund) - This program offers matching funds to local groups for neighborhood-initiated improvement, organizing, or planning projects. Every award is matched by the community through volunteer hours, locally raised funds, donated materials, and in-kind professional services. There are two levels of funding based on the request - from small amounts up to $25,000.