

Congratulations! You want to start a new chapter of the Women's National Book Association, and we want to help! As no one likes to reinvent the wheel, below you'll find guidelines and advice from previous chapter founders. Read the following information, check out the [national website](#) and [chapter websites](#). Read about [Member Benefits](#). If you'd like to see more, please contact [Bebe Brechner](#) for a link into our [Members-Only](#) webpage to review our Manual, by-laws, and other materials.

Becoming Chartered:

A representative of the National Board is required to attend at least one of your initial meetings as a part of the process to become a new chapter. At least 10 paying members need to participate in the charter chapter. At the Charter meeting, you will elect officers, create bylaws and obtain member approval. Set dues. Finally, you need to present a letter of intent and the bylaws to the National Board. Sample letters of intent are available, upon request. Please read the By-Laws regarding your attendance at the annual national board meeting and your chapter financial deadlines. This information may be found in the [Members Only](#) page of the website (password protected).

Financial and Legal Considerations:

Each state has different regulations regarding the establishment of nonprofits in the state. Research this and find out if the state requires incorporation, fees, or other requirements. A new chapter is responsible for researching these state requirements and adhering to them. The national board can help with the research, but the cost will need to be borne by the forming chapter. Each chapter needs to set up their nonprofit status with their state, receive tax-exempt status, and set up a bank account. A good resource to check out is the [National Council for Nonprofits](#), which has state links.

Dues:

Your president will need to attend the annual national meeting, so you might want to organize sooner in the year, so that you will have those dues to use towards travel expenses. All chapter presidents are automatically members of the National Board. Most of the chapters' dues are in the \$35 range. You could offer a "Charter year" dues price so if you go up in your second year, it wouldn't seem like as much of a shock. Each chapter must pay \$14 per member to National (\$17 for network members), so be sure to factor that in when coming up with a dues amount. This per member payment is waived in your charter year, to help you get off the ground. Consider offering a student/senior rate as well. PayPal is a good online payment option, although it takes a small percentage fee of each payment. Check out the [Membership Benefits](#) on the national website to make a case for your dues.

Officers/Board Members:

You must begin with four members to serve as:

President

Vice-President/President-Elect

Secretary

Treasurer

Most of the time, the founder is elected president. **The Treasurer is the most important officer the first year while you set up a bank account, and get your tax-exempt status.** Next you need to decide which Chair people are most important for starting up, and recruit members into those positions. Some of these you won't be able to fill until your second year. Some officers might also act as chairs the first year. Some of these may be handled by two people. You may reorder these of course, but this is a suggested priority list:

1st tier:

- Communications Chair (newsletter, website, emails, social media)
- Events or Programs Chair
- Membership Chair

2nd tier:

- Bookwoman Correspondent (our national publication)
- Website Chair (this can be combined with Communications)
- NRGM Chair (National Reading Group Month)

3rd tier:

- Community/Outreach Chair
- Immediate Past President
- Others, as needed

For checking availability of members for meetings, an online tool such as [Doodle Poll](#) is a great resource.

Meeting locations:

Having your first general meeting in a bookstore is perfect. In fact, having a bookstore that is basically a partner in your endeavor can make life much easier. Charlotte's bookstore partner became its physical address which is on checks and where people can send membership checks. It is good to have some meetings/events at the store. We recommend an independent bookstore, if feasible. Other meeting locations: a condo clubhouse, a school library, community center, restaurant, or library meeting room.

Don't overcrowd your calendar with meetings – make sure you can manage successfully the meetings you do organize. Be sure to spread the word around to organize these meetings, utilizing community connections and making sure that your meeting programs are diverse enough to support many different types of members.

Also, be sure you schedule regular board meetings to keep organized.

What is WNBA:

Please familiarize yourselves with the [national website](#), including the organization's mission and history. Also use the website URL in all your communications, among the members and to the public. www.wnba-books.org

For your new chapter, compose a one paragraph explanation of what you think the WNBA is, and what you want it to be in your city to send out to interested people when you invite them to the first meeting, so they come in with a little bit of info. For example, the Charlotte chapter emphasized that it is a professional organization even though you don't have to be in or associated with the book/publishing/education industry to join. Here's some sample wording you can use: *"A professional development group that provides women and men in all aspects of publishing to meet, network and engage in the promotion of books and literacy through community programs and events."*

Here are a few cool things people might not know about the WNBA & you can promote:

- a. The WNBA partners with the UN as an NGO to encourage education of girls and women in countries such as Afghanistan.
- b. Annually, the WNBA awards the Pannell award at BEA to two book stores—one general, one primarily children's—that have excelled at bringing together books and young people. The award consists of a \$1000 cash prize as well as a piece of original art.
- c. The WNBA awards a 'Woman of the Year' award to a woman in some facet of the book or publishing world who has gone above and beyond in her professional life.
- d. The WNBA sponsors *National Reading Group Month* in October. The various regional chapters usually put on events in support of the month, such as readings, author breakfasts, etc.
- e. The WNBA is now 100 years old! Not very many nonprofit organizations can claim such a longstanding organization. Check out our [Centennial website](#) for this rich history.

Website/Social Media:

We urge you to set up a Facebook Page for your chapter using the form: WNBA-your city. A Page is preferable to a Group for many reasons. It's easier for your members to see updates on a Page whereas with a Group, they have to either go to the page, or you have to send them a message. Updates on a Page show up in your news feed. If you set up a Facebook page, make sure to connect to the [WNBA National Facebook page](#) and other chapters' pages. Not everyone

is on Facebook, so you also will need to send out emails about meetings. You might use Evite or another online invitation program.

Some chapters have a Twitter account, and the national organization maintains three accounts on [Twitter](#) (general, NRG, and UN affiliated). If you set up a Twitter account, be sure to 'follow' the national and other chapters' accounts. The national website is on WordPress and may be replicated for each chapter, but you'll still need a web designer. There is a member who runs a WordPress website company who has helped set up many chapter websites at a very low cost. Please check with Bebe Brechner for the contact information.

The national organization maintains a [LinkedIn](#) group, also.

Communications:

Online programs such as Constant Contact or MailChimp may be used to send out notices and information. Create an email address for the chapter (gmail, yahoo, etc.) This needs to be accessible to the newsletter, events, and membership committees. Do not overwhelm your members with constant emails, but do keep in touch. Be sure someone is assigned to check the In Box weekly to keep up with queries. If you would like to use a Listserv for your board and/or members, the national website chairperson can set these up for your chapter.

Please be sure to submit your board members' email addresses and names to be on the appropriate national Listserv, as this is how the national organization communicates to the chapters – the national Listservs are: Chapter Presidents (includes VPs), Treasurers, Membership, Bookwoman, and Communications.

Materials:

A lot of the things you'll need, like Bylaws, already exist at other chapters and might just need slight revising. Copies of the national and chapter by-laws are available on the national website's [Members Only](#) page. Other chapters are very generous in sharing things like membership brochures, renewal forms, bookmark templates, and so on so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. The National meeting is a great resource for ideas for meetings that other chapters have done, as well as seeing what different chapters did differently, so you can cherry-pick the best options for you (what works for L.A. and NYC doesn't necessarily work for Charlotte or other mid-sized cities!)

Once you are a chartered chapter, a chapter logo will be created for your materials. Please use the logo and color scheme for all your materials and website.

National Reading Group Month (NRGM):

Please familiarize yourself with the [NRGM website](#). October is the National Reading Group Month, and this is the WNBA's signature event each year. Each chapter will organize a meeting around NRG. There is help at the national level in organizing these author events from the NRG Chairperson. A new chapter will benefit from organizing in spring, as it gives you a chance to get your chapter off the ground before October. There are national funds available for this event, but it is a lot of work, so keep it manageable your first year. If you do an author event, have a bookstore sell books. Publishers send authors to events where books are sold. Be sure the store reports back to the publisher how successful the event was.

Planning a public meeting

It is suggested that you pick a regular meeting date every month so people can more easily plan around events. Don't forget to get your events into the local paper and community papers. Each annual board meeting will provide a host of new programming ideas from each chapter. Here are a few used in the past:

1. Publishing in the 21st Century (LA); The Electronic World: Reading, Writing, Distributing (Boston)
2. WNBA Reads Its Own (LA)
4. Annual Fireside Chat (Detroit) potluck followed by discussion of 2 books
5. Book 'Em Read Me Week (Nashville) –also DC assisted The Reading Connection with their spring fundraiser
6. Writers who teach, teacher who write (Nashville) – professors of creative writing
7. A panel on food writing (Nashville)
8. National Poetry Month (Nashville & DC) – DC hosted 3 poet laureates
9. Network Brunches – at member's houses, fall and spring, with a special guest (DC)
10. Resume-building workshop

11. Meet-the-Agents (San Francisco & NY)
12. Bookstore owner's picks for Summer Beach Reads (Charlotte)
13. Book Swap (Charlotte)
14. Social Networking for Fun and Profit Panel Discussion (Charlotte)
15. The Rise of the YA Novel Panel Discussion (Charlotte)

Members:

Some suggestions for where to find members:

- Libraries (drop off fliers, Bookwoman)
- Bookstores (drop off fliers, encourage staff members to join)
- Local colleges English departments
- Book Bloggers
- Local writers' network
- Local chapter of SCBWI
- Book Editor for local newspaper (article preferably)

Startup Timeline example from the Charlotte Chapter (2009):

- 1st meeting was just 3 potential founders over lunch – a literary agent, a freelance author and editor, and a sales rep for Baker & Taylor. All agreed it was a good idea and went back to invite people to the next meeting. (February)
- 2nd meeting was at a local independent bookstore, with Mary Grey James, National President-Elect who gave a lot of background about the organization –about 10 people attended despite bad rain. (March 1)
- 3rd meeting was over lunch –about 12 people. At this point it was decided to stop inviting new people until the details (bylaws in particular) were nailed down. At this meeting officers were elected (drafted). (mid-March)
- 4th meeting was 4 officers over lunch. The Nashville chapter had provided bylaws which were distributed electronically before the meeting, and redlined. The bylaws were discussed and also what next steps and priorities. (early April)
- 5th meeting was drinks after work, 10 people, approved bylaws (early May)
- 6th meeting was first official event, the owner of the Independent bookstore gave a talk on her picks for Summer Reads. (mid June)

All of this took place in the spring between Feb-May. Then the board and officers had the summer to catch our breath. The president went to the National Board meeting (typically held in late May or early June at different chapter locations) and learned a lot. The board got together over the summer a few times and plan fall events. It wasn't very taxing, so long as everyone's in agreement about the direction and point of the chapter. That's also why around meeting #3 we asked members to temporarily stop bringing new people. Outreach is of course super-important for your group to grow and thrive, but explaining everything from scratch to some people while also trying to create bylaws was just too much. (This rule was only in place for 2 meetings.)

We are excited to hear that you would like to start a new chapter for this historic and prestigious organization, and we stand ready to help you in any way we can. Please contact us for more information or help.

Contact info:

Chapter Development Chairperson:

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