

MISSION CONTROL

HOW TO CONDUCT AN OPEN HOUSE

A practical guide for Lodge Open Houses

WASHINGTON PRIVATE-CLUB ALCOHOL RULES

Membership Drive: A Washington licensed private club may hold a public membership function where club liquor may be given or sold as part of the membership-drive activities. The function must be advertised as a Membership Drive.

Timing: Washington rules allow two membership-drive days per calendar quarter. There must be at least seven days between membership events. One membership drive may be held on two consecutive days once per calendar year.

Open House: At a public Open House, alcohol may not be sold, served, possessed or consumed in areas open to the general public. Without alcohol a lodge can hold unlimited open houses.

Before advertising or conducting your event, confirm current Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board

It doesn't have to be complicated. The goal is simple: invite people into your Lodge, show them what the Elks do, make them feel welcome, and give them an opportunity to join. Use this guide as a starting point and adapt it to fit your Lodge and community.

1. Plan Your Event

Choose a Date

Select your date early and check community calendars for potential conflicts such as school activities, festivals, Chamber events and other major local events.

Know Who You Want to Reach

Think about the membership your Lodge wants to build. Your audience will help shape the event and advertising.

- Young families
- Younger or middle-aged members
- Retirees
- Community volunteers
- Business and civic leaders
- A combination of groups

Decide What You'll Offer

- Food and refreshments
- Children's activities
- Lodge tours
- Program displays
- Games or entertainment

If families are invited, consider having Elroy Elk at the event.

Set a Budget

Plan for food, children's activities, advertising, printing and signage. Use the separate Sample Membership Drive Budget in Mission Control to help you plan.

2. Promote Your Event

Use several ways to reach your community rather than relying on one type of advertising. Premade tools are provided on the state website.

- Lodge Facebook and other social media
- Community Facebook groups
- Chamber of Commerce and community event calendars
- Local newspapers, reader boards, flyers and posters
- Radio stations offering free nonprofit announcements
- Personal invitations from members

Encourage every Lodge member to invite someone. The WSEA Marketing Team has also provided a Press Release Template your Lodge can customize.

Your advertising should quickly answer: What's happening? Why should I come? Is there something there for me or my family?

3. Show Them What Elks Do

Your Open House should show visitors that the Elks are much more than a social club.

Every Lodge has been provided pop-up banners showcasing our programs and impact. Use them and add tables or displays for programs important to your Lodge.

- Veterans
- Youth
- Scholarships
- Drug Awareness
- Hoop Shoot
- Therapy Program
- Community service
- Lodge charitable programs and activities

Invite State Program Chairs or knowledgeable Lodge members to help represent these programs. Keep presentations short and conversational.

Don't just tell prospective members what Elks do. Show them.

4. Get Your Lodge & Team Ready

First impressions matter, but you don't need to overthink it. Before guests arrive:

- ☐ Clean and declutter the Lodge
- ☐ Check the restrooms and tidy the entrance
- ☐ Set up program displays and Membership Tables
- ☐ Prepare the food and refreshment area
- ☐ Have applications, pens and candidate appointment cards ready
- ☐ Make sure volunteers know their jobs

Have enough members available to welcome guests, represent programs, answer questions, process applications, conduct interviews and provide hospitality.

A Lodge full of members working together is one of the best advertisements you can have.

5. Event Day - Keep It Moving

Think of the Open House as a well-choreographed dance. Each person has a role, and prospective members should move comfortably from one step to the next without wondering where to go.

WELCOME → DISCOVER → CONNECT → JOIN → INTERVIEW → FELLOWSHIP

WELCOME

A greeter welcomes each guest, gets their name, briefly explains what will happen and personally introduces them to a host. Don't point people across the room - introduce them.

DISCOVER

The host guides the guest through program displays. Representatives briefly explain what the Elks do and help guests discover programs that connect with their interests.

CONNECT

Introduce the guest to members at the Membership Table. Talk about the Lodge, upcoming activities, volunteer opportunities and what interests them. Then explain the application and ask them to join.

JOIN

Once an application is completed, personally introduce the candidate to the Lodge Secretary. The Secretary processes the application and applicable fees and connects the candidate with an interviewer.

INTERVIEW

Conduct the candidate interview in a separate area. Learn about their interests, skills and volunteer interests. Before they leave, provide a Candidate Appointment Card with upcoming voting, Orientation, Initiation and contact information.

FELLOWSHIP

Invite candidates to enjoy refreshments, meet members, explore the Lodge and learn about upcoming activities. They arrived as visitors; help them leave feeling like they already belong.

6. Follow Up

- Complete the candidate investigation and voting process.
- Send candidates a short thank-you note.
- Keep them informed about Orientation and Initiation.
- Invite them back to Lodge activities.

At Orientation, don't just explain Elksdom - help new members get involved. Have volunteer opportunities, committee information, Lodge calendars and sign-up sheets available.

Try to connect each new member with at least one activity, program, committee or volunteer opportunity that interests them.

7. Debrief & Do It Again

Gather your team for a quick debrief while the event is still fresh.

- What worked?
- What didn't?
- Did guests feel welcome?
- Which advertising worked?
- Did we have enough volunteers?
- What should we change next time?

Then do one more thing: set the date for your next Membership Drive.

Remember

You don't need a huge budget, an elaborate event or dozens of volunteers. You need a welcoming Lodge, members who are proud of what they do, and an opportunity for your community to experience it.

**INVITE THEM IN.
SHOW THEM WHAT WE DO.
ASK THEM TO JOIN.
HELP THEM GET INVOLVED.**

That's how you build membership.