

How to Create and Run a Local Events Co-op

1. Why a Co-op?

- **Challenge:** Local chapters of professional organisations often struggle to provide frequent, valuable in-person events in smaller populations.
- **Solution:** By collaborating across organisations, you can expand opportunities for members, strengthen professionalism, and foster local networking.
- **Outcomes**
 - **Value for members:** Members gain access to more events, diverse perspectives, and stronger community ties without additional membership costs.
 - **Value for organisations:** Increased attendance increases viability of events, opportunities and awareness of our organisations, and an uplift in professional practice and integrity.
 - **Volunteer-friendly:** A co-op respects the limited time of local leaders while multiplying impact through simple, peer-to-peer collaboration.
 - **Retaining organisational autonomy and privacy:** All organisations have their own rules around communications to their members and their own practices for content-selection and ticketing. Running this co-op model allows for fuss-free collaboration while maintaining all organisational-specific autonomy and privacy.

2. How?

- Leaders of related and interested local groups join a Co-op Teams chat.
- They post details of events that they are hosting where they would welcome extra guests on the chat.
- The leaders of the other groups identify events on the stream that would be interesting to their own members and forward them on through their own organisational communication streams.
- Individual members see these notices and can visit the ticketing website of the event host directly and reserve or purchase tickets if they wish.

3. Tips on Setting up

a. Leverage Personal Contacts

- Identify local representatives of related professional organisations
- Use your existing networks to get contact details to be able to reach out personally — credibility and trust are built faster through known contacts.

b. Direct Phone Calls

- Start with a phone call to explain the idea informally.
- Emphasise the benefits: shared events, more value for members, and minimal administrative burden.
- Gauge interest and secure verbal buy-in before sending written material and inviting to a group meeting

c. Share the Written Proposal

- Circulate a concise written proposition (see template below).
- This document provides clarity, sets expectations, and serves as a reference point for decisions (e.g., including or excluding for-profit CPD providers).

d. Initial Teams Meeting

- Host an online meeting with interested leaders. Ideally time this for 3-4 weeks after the initial phone contact. It's around enough time to find space in diaries and not so long for people to forget about the original conversation
- Discuss and agree verbally on the operating procedure, using the template agreement statement as a starting point
- Tweak the agreement if necessary to reflect local preferences.

e. Set up a Teams Chat

- Someone will need to host the chat and add the members
- If possible, make the settings for the Teams chat so that each member can add new members themselves later; essential for when individuals retire from their role or want to job-share
- Add all coop leaders – sometimes workarounds need to be made like handling multinational employer security restrictions on access to external Teams chats by using personal email addresses

4. Template Agreement Statement

Proposal for an Events Co-op

We propose a co-operative arrangement for related professional organisations in <LOCATION> to share opportunities for local in-person CPD and networking events. The purpose is to provide our individual members with more opportunities to meet in person and learn about issues relevant to our specific location, while not increasing the burden for each organisation's voluntary leadership to create these opportunities.

Each organisation agrees to:

- Offer in-person events, preferably with some CPD content, networking opportunities are also welcome.
- Allow members of other cooperating organisations to attend at least one local event per year, with the price and quantity of tickets available determined by the host organisation.
- Manage their own events and ticketing in their usual method
- Share event opportunities via a central Teams chat between the cooperating organisations' local leaders
- Promptly forward relevant event details on via your organisation's members-only channels.
- Be mindful of the lead-time for publication and promotion some organisations operate within – some channels will require a month or more to get out to the general membership
- Respect the voluntary nature of organisational leaders and their limited time.
- Introduce successors to the chat when leadership changes.
- Allow organisations to leave at any time.

A Teams meeting chat will serve as our central platform. Please note that some employers restrict access to external chats; using personal email addresses may be necessary.

The co-op is limited to volunteer-led professional organisations.