

Making Your u3a Interest Groups Unmissable: A Guide to Attracting and Engaging Members

These points were taken from the u3a Guidance "How to make your u3a offer irresistible" (jan 2024 version) which forms part of the Recruitment & Retention Toolkit:

1. **Introduction:** The guide aims to help make u3a's interest group offerings appealing to current and potential new members. New groups are essential for growth and diversity, which in turn increases membership and the pool of expertise to start new Groups.
2. **Suggestions for Starting New Interest Groups:**
 - Develop new groups based on existing ones.
 - Share groups across multiple u3as.
 - Use online resources to create new groups.
 - Start groups based on free courses designed by others.
3. **Examples:**
 - A wine tasting group transitioned to a virtual "Raise Your Glass" group via Zoom.
 - Carlton and Gedling u3a started a Film Group that meets online to discuss films from free streaming platforms.
 - Interest groups can follow courses from platforms like Future Learn and The Open University.
4. **Benefits of Using Other People's Content:**
 - Creates a shared learning experience.
 - Expands the range of interest groups.
 - Reduces the burden on group convenors.
 - Attracts newly and recently retired individuals.
5. **Sharing Interest Groups:**
 - Sharing groups enriches and extends the offerings of each participating u3a.
 - Online or hybrid groups can accommodate more members without significant additional costs.
 - Examples include informal advertising of groups in other u3as and formal networks like the North Nottinghamshire Neighbourhood Network.

6. Online or Hybrid Groups:

- Online or hybrid groups remove barriers related to space, time, and travel.
- Examples include a Radical History group, an opera appreciation group, a French conversation class, and a poetry group.

7. Managing Interest Groups:

- Support from a capable team is crucial.
- Conduct surveys to understand members' interests.
- Offer activities that appeal to newly retired individuals.
- Ensure the website is attractive and up-to-date.
- Avoid waiting lists by setting up parallel groups.

8. Related Documents:

- Recruitment and Retention Toolkit.
- Transforming your website.
- Market research report.
- Making your u3a more inclusive.
- Interest Groups Matter.
- Handbook for Group Convenors/Leaders.

This guide provides a comprehensive approach to making u3a's interest group offerings more attractive and accessible to a wider audience.