

STARTING A NEW RANGER ASSOCIATION

The International Ranger Federation and European Ranger Federation encourages rangers in countries and states where there is no formal group of rangers to consider starting a new Ranger Association. Starting a Ranger Association can seem a daunting task for one person. So it is advisable to have some discussions with colleagues. With their help you should then establish a small steering group to take the project forward.

Associations are formed in order for professional rangers and/or partners to reach a common goal whether for collaborative; legislative, educational and/or social reasons. Associations are a great way for a group of people to reach bigger goals that in turn will impact their personal development as well as helping to lift the profile of the ranger profession.

These guidelines for starting a new Ranger association has been structured in two phases.

PHASE 1 - considers the tasks necessary to assess the viability of starting a new association.

PHASE 2 – considers the follow-up tasks needed once the decision is made to start an association.

PHASE 1

Who is being targeted for Membership?

1. Find some colleagues who share your opinions and thoughts and who are willing to support you in taking the next steps as part of the first steering group
2. Determine the number of people and/or the organisations that could be potential members
3. Find their contact information for mailing purposes
4. Find out their opinion about forming a ranger association and their needs

What other associations represent the ranger profession – do any exist?

1. Find out what member benefits they are offering
2. Find out the number of members and their membership fees
3. If possible, find out if their members are satisfied
4. Find out if you could work together with the other group(s)

What are the Benefits of forming an Association?

1. Establish the services/benefits that are available to members such as –
 - i. Professional development through a formal system such as CPD (Continuous Professional Development)
 - ii. Publications and electronic communications
 - iii. Possibly a group insurance plan (if appropriate)
 - iv. Free attendance to certain training/networking events or social activities throughout the year
 - v. An annual meeting of members with keynote speakers and addressing topical issues or challenges facing rangers.
 - vi. Discounts on certain products or services offered through links with or membership of corporate partners,
 - vii. Networking support and sharing of experience/best practice locally; regionally; nationally and internationally
 - viii. Lobbying efforts on behalf of members and the profession.

Contacting potential members

Using the information gathered in Phase 1, you should now prepare a form of communication (letter; leaflet; email) to make direct contact with potential members and consider all responses before deciding whether or not there is sufficient interest to move to **PHASE 2**

PHASE 2

Having established that there is sufficient interest in forming an association the steering group should now consider -

Who will serve as the first Board Members?

1. Select people who have the time and the motivation to give to the new association
2. If possible, choose people who are recognized in the profession
3. Make sure the group represents different areas of the profession e.g. State employees; rangers from regional or local employers; volunteers (if appropriate)
4. Select an odd number of people (for voting purposes)

What is the Purpose and Name of the Association?

1. Decide on a name for the new association
2. Together with the new board members, determine the purpose of the new association
3. Create as soon as possible a logo and produce a flag for first pictures etc

What is the Mission Statement?

1. Use the purpose of the new association as the starting point
2. Incorporate member benefits into the statement
3. You should create the vision of the association. This should be one to two sentences in length. It should be a broad statement to allow for change throughout the years

What are the Income and Expenses?

1. Membership Fees – Decide whether there will be one set cost for all members or different member categories such as - Full ; Associate; Affiliate; Honorary; Student; Unwaged; Retired; Volunteer; Life or Corporate members etc. The fees structure needs to be reflective of the profession
2. Other Income – This could include sponsorships, grants, registration fees, partnerships with profession partners, donations, etc. This is very important for financial stability since membership numbers will fluctuate from year to year.
3. Determine the services/benefits that members will be charged for in order to help generate additional income such as registration fees for attending some seminars or training activities etc.
4. Annual Budget – Once the income and expenses are determined, it is important to set an annual budget based on the projected income and expenses so the Board and its members know how much money is allotted for each of the activities of the association

What are the Statutes or Bylaws of the Association?

1. These defines the structure of an association
2. They serve as a guideline for procedures
3. They reflects the image of the association
4. Examine IRF and ERF statutes plus those of other associations to determine how to draft them

5. They may be required if applying for tax-exempt/legal status
6. Topics typically covered include membership categories; member qualifications or experience; membership benefits and services; board members, their roles, qualifications and terms of office; election procedures, as well as other topics related to the members and board members

What type of Management is best suited for the Association?

1. Wholly run by volunteers – The Board/Committee Members would volunteer their time and do everything for the association without remuneration (except expenses)
2. Volunteers plus Full-Time Employee(s) – The Board Members would volunteer their time along with 1-2 paid employees providing administrative and other types of support

Other tasks

Once the above steps and decisions have been taken, the association will then need to design a logo; determine the mailing/office address; design and print letterhead, stationery and other marketing materials; open bank accounts and obtain the necessary insurance or indemnity policies.

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