



Indicators for a Powerful Local Union

The leadership of AFT Washington is committed to supporting all our locals in efforts to inform, engage, and activate their membership. We know from experience and research that to accomplish this goal, we need to work in ways that continually move potential members to members, members to activists, and activists to leaders. We can do this through understanding their needs and addressing their issues, so that our members see the power of the union, are drawn to it, and realize that the union’s power comes from their commitment and involvement. The members are the union.

This tool provides a framework for local union leadership, with the assistance of AFT Washington staff, to track and evaluate the activities and structural components of each local as the local leadership works to develop capacity and expand its reach.

This tool is organized in checklist fashion for ease of use, but it is meant to be a starting point for a thoughtful assessment and discussion of your local’s current status and should be used regularly to track your progress and development towards being a “Powerful Local Union,” and to help sustain its strength. It is not a definitive listing of all programs and resources.

This instrument should be used to:

1. Facilitate an in-depth conversation within your local union leadership about the union’s capacity and operations.
2. Guide how your union currently functions and to then analyze and improve its outcomes.
3. Set goals and put a Powerful Locals Initiative plan in place.

As always, AFT and AFT Washington staff are available to work with you.

Local: _____ Date: _____

Assessor: _____

Internal Governance

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Has a current, legal, approved Constitution and Bylaws which are on file with AFT and AFT Washington.
		b. Has integrated Best Union Practices for Part-time Faculty into the constitution and bylaws.
		c. Has evaluated and revised governance documents and practices to ensure full representation and inclusion of all constituencies, racial/ethnic, gender and other communities within the membership.
		d. Has a clear and democratic process for removal of union representatives from positions.
		e. Adheres to the Constitution and Bylaws.
		f. Formalizes policies and procedures that promote democracy within the union.
		g. Sets annual budget aligned with goals, with input from membership.
		h. Develops goals with identified activities, adjusting the plan as necessary.

		i. Maintains a positive working relationship with state and national affiliates of both AFT and AFL-CIO.
		j. Constitution has clearly defined responsibilities for officers and elected or appointed positions.
		k. Has a grievance committee trained in handling grievances/workplace disputes.
		l. Has a clear and utilized grievance procedure.
		m. Leaders have been trained on and understand basic legal concepts including such things as duty of fair representation, Weingarten rights, and just cause.
		n. Minimizes use of employer email and other resources to protect privacy of union communications and avoid ethics violations.

Data and Budget Management

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Regularly receives an updated list of bargaining unit members from payroll/personnel that contains department, home addresses, phone numbers etc.
		b. Consistently finds opportunities to collect home emails, cell phone numbers, demographics, etc. for members and non-members (potential members).
		c. Sends updated membership data to AFT or enters membership data changes directly into the AFT Connect database every month.
		d. Has an uncomplicated procedure for the intake, processing, and maintaining of membership enrollment forms.
		e. Forwards payroll deduction authorization forms to the employer in a timely manner after keeping a copy for the local.
		f. Reconciles payroll deduction lists from the employer with the locals' records regularly.
		g. Has a clear, properly worded membership enrollment form that includes a COPE option.
		h. Has a realistic and balanced budget based on accurate income and expenditures, approved by the executive board or in accordance with constitution and bylaws.
		i. Has the Treasurer or designee produce reports and documents necessary to allow informed budgetary decisions by the executive board.
		j. Dedicates money for legal expenses.
		k. Files federal, state, and county forms when due (IRS 990 return, county tax payments, payroll forms, etc.).
		l. Submits Per Capita payments to AFT, to AFT Washington, and to the local's Central Labor Council, along with membership data on a monthly basis.
		m. Performs annual audits that meet AFT's guidelines.

Communications

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Determines how best to communicate with members, activists, and worksite reps depending upon the message.
		b. Has sign-up forms and/or an online process to collect members' home e-mail addresses.
		c. Prints or emails a newsletter reflective of the diversity of the membership that is distributed on a regular basis.
		d. Has all leaders signed up for and regularly using <i>AFT LeaderNet</i> .
		e. Keeps an updated Facebook page with at least 10% of members connected to the page, utilizes other social networking as needed, and monitors the number of likes and comments.

		f. Uses State Web or other platform for local website with new content at least once per week.
		g. Uses a variety of surveys to poll members and ensures that all members have the opportunity to participate.
		h. Requests and/or attends training on new tools regularly.

Worksite Representative Structure

(Worksite representatives may be Stewards, Site Reps, Building/Department Reps, etc.)

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Has a plan for identifying and recruiting worksite representatives (reps) from all constituencies, racial/ethnic, gender and other communities within the membership.
		b. Has all worksite reps positions filled.
		c. Clearly states expectations of worksite reps with detailed job descriptions outlining responsibilities.
		d. Trains worksite reps to increase effectiveness, including knowledge and skills to ensure inclusion of underrepresented groups.
		e. Has a worksite rep structure that considers the balance between reps and number of members.
		f. Uses rewards/incentives/shows appreciation for worksite reps (i.e. t-shirts, public bio, certificates).
		g. Has a process for replacing worksite reps due to vacancy, ineffectiveness, etc.
		h. Has a democratic process to elect and remove worksite reps.
		i. Turns representation into organizing opportunities when possible.

Increasing Capacity

Part One: Membership Outreach

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Effectively and consistently enrolls new members.
		b. Has a new employee outreach program/procedure (i.e. has a presence at New Employee Orientation, personal contact with new hires).
		c. Sets and meets membership goals for growth.
		d. Utilizes data, assessments, mapping, and charting tools to identify individual employees or groups of employees where membership growth is possible and to ensure inclusion of underrepresented groups.
		e. Designs and implements strategies to reach potential members that involves rank and file members.
		f. Incorporates various approaches for visits with employees with consideration for varied work schedules, time constraints, etc.
		g. Initiates follow up after membership form is signed.
		h. Finds and/or creates opportunities to have organizing conversations around such things as bargaining, grievances, professional issues, or political issues.

Part Two: Leadership Development

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Incorporates recruitment process for engaging influential people to join union activities and leadership (i.e., joining committees, gathering signatures, holding roles in membership meetings)
		b. Proactively reaches out to membership of groups underrepresented among local leadership.
		c. Provides the opportunity for current local leaders or emerging leaders to attend state and national training conferences.
		d. Creates development process for influential people to become further involved in their union.
		e. Tracks influential people in specific units, departments, and buildings.
		f. Distributes responsibilities to existing and emerging leaders.
		g. Trains and mentors new officers and executive board members and incorporates cultural relevance into these trainings.
		h. Proactively reaches out to members of groups underrepresented among local leadership.

Part Three: Issues

Opportunities for member engagement and membership growth are also found beyond the borders of the workplace and contract administration. Identifying outside arenas that have direct impact on your members, or are of interest to your members, makes the union a dynamic and relevant entity worthy of membership.

Political/Legislative Involvement

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Uses internal communications to promote political/legislative actions.
		b. Uses only personal contact data to communicate political priorities with members and potential members (e.g. personal e-mail, address, phone numbers).
		c. Cultivates relationships with legislators, boards of trustees, or school boards.
		d. Engages in endorsement process in local jurisdiction races.
		e. Mobilizes members and potential members for state, local, and federal political activities and lobbying (elections, presentations, rallies, and lobby days).
		f. Encourages all elected leaders to contribute to Committee on Political Education (COPE)
		g. Proactively promotes member participation in COPE through payroll deduction or other automatic means on a regular basis.
		h. Recruits at least one member to participate in AFT Washington’s Legislative Affairs Committee and the Committee on Political Education.

Community and Labor Outreach

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Is affiliated with and has delegates to their Central Labor Council.
		b. Develops and maintains relationships with student leaders and activists.
		c. Develops and maintains relationships with community and labor partners
		d. Has regular meetings with other labor organizations from the worksite.