



## 5-Step Plan to Grow Membership

### Step 1: Define & Share Why WINI Matters

- **Make a short message/pitch** for your Institute (“We’re WINI; we offer fun, friendship & community – regular get-togethers, crafts/events, learning, making a difference locally”).
- Encourage current members to share personal stories: *why they joined, what they enjoy*. These real stories are powerful.

**Why this helps:** Many people decide to join when they hear from peers. If they hear someone similar to them say “I enjoy the crafts evenings” or “I found a group of friends here”, it feels more relatable.

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### Step 2: Use Local Physical Touchpoints

Since many are more comfortable with face-to-face, paper, in-person, use these local opportunities:

- Put up posters/flyers in places like community centres, libraries, churches, post offices, doctor’s surgeries, cafés. Simple design: WINI name, a few words about “join us for friendship & fun”, one contact number or person.
  - Attend or hold stalls at local fairs, markets, social clubs. Talk to people, hand out invitations or simple flyers.
  - Invite friends, neighbours, or people they meet in other groups. Word of mouth is especially strong in small towns/rural NI.
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### Step 3: Host Taster Events or “Bring a Friend” Meetings

- Organise low-barrier “come and see” sessions. These could be tea mornings, craft-taster workshops, brief talks, or even small outings. No membership required for first visit.
- Encourage members to bring a friend who might enjoy it. Even bring a neighbour, relative or someone they meet.

**Why this helps:** Reduces fear/barriers. Someone may be interested but not want to commit without seeing what it is like. A friendly event where people can “pop in” is less intimidating.

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### Step 4: Use Partnerships & Local Networks

- Connect with local women’s groups, church groups, Age NI, local heritage or craft groups. Ask if WINI can speak at their meeting, or leave flyers, or host a joint activity.
  - Work with local councils, libraries or community centres to get listed in their calendars/events. Many of these places already have older audiences.
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### Step 5: Simplify Joining & Provide Warm Welcome

- Make sure the “joining” process is easy: simple form, maybe help someone fill it in, arrange meetings at times/places friendly to older women.
  - Assign a “welcome person” in each Institute: someone friendly, available, maybe able to call or meet someone new, show them around, introduce them to others.
  - Celebrate new members publicly in meetings or newsletter, so people feel valued.
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### Additional Ideas & Tips

- **Testimonials:** Write or record short quotes from members (“I joined because ...”, “My favourite part is ...”) and include in flyers or read in meetings.
- **Local Media:** Local newspapers or parish magazines often have free notice-boards / “What’s On” pages. Send in short announcements or stories about a past Institute event to raise awareness.
- **Social Media:** If someone in the group is comfortable, a simple Facebook post in a local Facebook group or a community WhatsApp group (if those exist locally) can help. Keep it very simple—maybe ask a more tech-savvy member to help.
- **Visibility in the community:** Wear badges at events, name badges for members, visible display of WINI at any public event. Makes people ask “What’s this group?”
- **Follow up:** When someone shows interest (visits, takes a flyer), follow up with a phone call or letter. A personal touch goes a long way.

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## Things to Keep in Mind / Barriers & How to Overcome

- **Transportation / distance:** For some women, getting to meeting places might be difficult. Try to rotate meeting locations if possible or arrange car-shares.
  - **Timing:** Avoid very early or very late times; consider times when members are more likely free (morning/early afternoon/early evening).
  - **Accessibility:** Ensure venues are physically accessible (ramps, seating, toilets), and that people feel safe in terms of mobility etc.
  - **Affordability:** Keep event costs modest; some people may be on fixed incomes.
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## How can Headquarters Help?

- Provide support on flyer and poster templates
- Post activity on our main social pages
- Provide an opportunity for showing what your institute can do through magazine or online
- Provide non-member questionnaires to help facilitate discussions with non-members
- Provide guidance/support on any concerns your Institute may have regarding meetings and new members.