

Building a NORC Team



Great neighbourhoods start with you.



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NEIGHBOURHOODS WEBSITE

Check out the [neighbourhoods website](#) to find more how-to guides, find your neighbourhood and subscribe to the e-newsletter.

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This material is available in alternative accessible format upon request. Please contact us a minimum of 3-5 business days before is required.

NORC INNOVATION CENTRE CONNECTION

This resource was developed by the City of Waterloo and is informed by materials created by the NORC Innovation Centre (NIC) at University Health Network. While the content draws on NIC frameworks and tools, it has been adapted for local use. The views expressed here are those of the City of Waterloo.

GUIDE VERSION

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About this guide

This guide will help you build a team of members who focus on developing neighbourly connections and creating an aging in community group, referred to as a NORC Ambassador Team throughout this document. This guide is focused on people who live in multi-unit buildings, but it can also work for those in the same neighbourhood or on the same street. Every community is different, so you can follow these steps in the way that works best for you. Start where you want and use the guide however you like.

If you want to talk about your building or neighbourhood and how to build a NORC team, email us at neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca.

What is a NORC?

DEFINITIONS

NORC: A NORC is a building or neighbourhood where many older adults live. These buildings or neighbourhoods were not built just for seniors. They are regular communities that just happen to have a higher number of older adults.

NORC program: A NORC program is a resident led program, where residents take on a leadership role, with the support of the Neighbourhoods team, to grow neighbour connection and help fellow neighbours age in place. These programs make life better by improving quality of life, helping people feel connected, supporting their wellbeing, and giving easy access to community services.

Because so many older adults live in one place, it is a great chance to create programs that offer support and activities right in the building or neighbourhood. These programs make life easier and more fun, helping people stay connected with their neighbours and live where they feel comfortable to help age in community.

Step 1: Gather involvement

After you have made connections with your neighbours, the next step is to get more people involved to build a NORC Ambassador Team. The University Health Network encourages people to look for residents who want to keep aging in place and can help make the vision real. You might reconnect with neighbours you already know or meet new ones. Having a group of people with different ideas and experiences will make sure there are lots of good ideas and enough help to make them happen.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- **Representation:** Try to include people from different friend groups, life experiences, and cultural or language backgrounds. This helps your group reflect the diversity of your community.
- **Group size:** You need enough members to share the work, bring new ideas, and keep things going if someone moves or gets sick. But don't make the group too big, or decisions will take too long. Many groups find that 3-5 people work well.

WAYS TO GET PEOPLE INVOLVED

- **Start a group chat.** With permission, use phone numbers, an email list, or a messaging app (like Facebook Messenger) to share your ideas and find neighbours who are interested.
- **Get permission to stay in touch.** Ask members if you can contact them about updates and plan a few meeting dates to talk about ideas.
- **Host an information night.** Share your vision with residents, gather feedback, and see who wants to join.
- **Put up flyers.** Post them around the building to explain your group's goals and what you hope to do.

¹ (NORC Innovation Centre at University Health Network, 2025)

Step 2: Establish your team norms

WORKING AS A TEAM

Once you have established a group of people who are willing to work together to help run the NORC program, it is time to decide how to organize your group. Talk about what style works best and how to keep things running smoothly.

Tips to Consider:

- Assign clear roles like chair, vice-chair, note taker, treasurer, or communications coordinator.
- Set meeting dates so everyone knows when to meet, such as the first Monday of every month.
- Share tasks clearly so everyone knows what they are responsible for, try highlighting actions in the notes or sending a follow-up message with everyone's actions.

ASSIGN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To provide structure, consider creating designated roles and setting up responsibilities to help lead the group. The table below outlines some key roles and responsibilities that you may help your group.

Role	Description
Chair/ Discussion Lead	• Communicates consistently with City staff when needed • Leads group and meeting discussions • Ensures all members voices are heard • Communicates with building management or condo board
Vice Chair/ Community Connector	• Connects with other member of the group and building • Communicates updates from community to group • Works with note taker to communicate updates to community
Email Manager/Note Taker	• Keeps a list of members and their contact information • Takes notes during meetings • Shares written notes with the group and other people that need them • Manages mail or messages sent to the group and passes them to the right person
Treasurer/ Budget Coordinator	• Keeps track of all expenses • Gives a report at each meeting • Handles banking needs

MEETINGS

Meetings help your group stay organized. They give you time to connect with neighbours, build positive relationships, share ideas, and plan fun activities for your building. Meetings can happen in person at a gathering spot, around a kitchen table, or online using video calls. How formal your meetings are depends on your group and the type of meeting.

Tips for Successful Meetings:

- **Make an agenda** to keep the conversation on track and share it before the meeting.
- **Choose an accessible space** in your building or nearby.
- **Invite special guests** to talk about important topics.
- **Start with important acknowledgements** including a land acknowledgement tied to your space and community, group norms to remind everyone why you are gathering, or other items important to reflect on each meeting.
- **Decide how often** and for how long the group will meet.

Step 3: Support group decision making and conflict management

Conflict and differences of opinion are normal when working in a group. Here are some tips to help prevent and manage conflict:

- **Make a group handbook.** Write down the rules, how decisions will be made, and how to handle conflict. This helps solve problems quickly.
- **Assign clear roles.** Give each person a job and explain what they do. This avoids confusion.
- **Communicate openly.** Encourage everyone to share concerns politely and respectfully.
- **Stay calm.** Speak in a relaxed tone. Getting loud or upset can make things worse.
- **Listen carefully.** Try to understand the other person's point of view. Pick a quiet time and place to talk, not in the middle of a meeting. Focus on finding a solution instead of blaming.

Conflict is normal, especially for new groups. Most groups go through stages like forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. The “storming” stage helps everyone learn about each other's styles and personalities. For more tips, check out the [Preventing and Working Through Neighbourhood Conflict](#) guide.

Step 4: Communicate with your community

Once you have a group of neighbours who share the same goal of aging in place, and have discussed how your group will operate, it is a good idea to consider how you will communicate with your building.

INTRODUCING YOUR GROUP

Think about what your neighbours need to know. What will help them understand your group's purpose? Your introduction should make people feel welcome and interested in joining activities.

Here are two easy ways to introduce your group:

- **Write an announcement** for the building newsletter or social media page.
- **Host a casual event** like a coffee chat, garden tea party, or an information session where people can drop in and learn more.

CREATING REGULAR COMMUNICATION

After introducing your aging in place group, you will want to keep in touch with your neighbours regularly. Good communication helps everyone stay informed and involved.

Here are some easy ways to share updates:

- **Newsletters** – Write a monthly or quarterly newsletter with news, projects, and upcoming events. Send it by email or print copies for those who prefer paper.
- **Posters and flyers** – Put up notices in common areas (with permission).
- **Email and phone** – Create an email list or phone tree to share meeting details and event info.
- **Social media** – Start a Facebook group or use apps like Instagram or Nextdoor to share updates and build connections. Online groups can be a great place to share recommendations, provide supports, and encourage relationship building. For tips on setting up and moderating an online community, check out the [Managing a Neighbourhood Facebook Group](#) guide.

Make it inclusive:

- Use big fonts and high contrast colours for posters.
- Offer translations or bilingual volunteers at events.
- Share information in both digital and printed formats for those who are not online.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY!

Regular updates help neighbours know what's happening, boost participation, and build excitement for your group.

² (NORC Innovation Centre at University Health Network, 2025)

Step 5 : Make time for planning connections and updating the team

Once your group feels confident with how they will run and involve neighbours, it's time to get started planning workshops, resources, or activities for your NORC building or community! Explore the resource section below for ways to support this next step. It's also a good idea to spend some time re-visiting group plans and guidelines once per year to ensure details are current and work with how the group is running.

Resources

Want to learn more about supporting a vibrant, caring, and connected neighbourhood? Check out these:

- Funds
 - [Neighbourhood Matching Fund](#)
 - [Mini grants](#)
 - [Operating Grant](#)
- How To Guides
 - [Planning a Neighbourhood Event](#)
 - [Becoming a NORC Ambassador](#)
 - [Creating Connections in a Multi-unit Building](#)
 - [Being Neighbourly](#)
 - [Supporting and Encourage an Inclusive Community](#)
 - [Preventing and Working Through Neighbourhood Conflict](#)

CONNECT WITH US

As shared throughout this document, the Neighbourhoods team is here to help! Don't hesitate to reach out along any stage of your journey. Thanks for connecting with your neighbours and making great neighbourhood opportunities come to life!

References

1. NORC Innovation Centre, University Health Network. (2025). *Connecting Season Workbook*.
2. NORC Innovation Centre, University Health Network. (2025). *Starting Season Workbook*.