



## TOOLKIT FOR TEXAS CHAPTERS

### Dealing with Your School

Of course, after you've got people to agree to join, you've got to deal with the school's red tape. Even though this is student-led, it's important to have at least the silent approval of school faculty if you want running the club to be easier.

### How to Get the Club Approved

Getting the club approved in the first place can sometimes be tough depending on the environment you're in. There are several approaches you should take to make it easier:

- If you need the principal's approval in person, make sure you know exactly how your branch of the club is going to operate inside and out. Bring printed copies of your proposed constitution and other important documents, and have in mind a list of responses to common questions.
- If you need to submit an application online or through email, collect all the required information and email it to the faculty member that approves extra-curriculars at your school. Give them a short summary of your request in the email and sign it professionally.
- If you need a sponsor in order to have your club approved, you should still have all your material ready. More sponsors will be willing to sign on if they understand what they are signing up for. It's also good to have a small group of people interested, perhaps on a sign up sheet or petition, to prove that this club is worth their time and that there are dedicated students that will run it.
- If you have guidelines you must meet that the club currently doesn't, see how you can change the club's constitution or policies to fit the guidelines. MFOL is not a monolith - you don't have to be exactly the same as everyone else. Adapt to the rules at your school if you must.
- If you have a lack of student support, try to find some friends to help you start the club. Reach out on social media and get students who might want to be involved. It might be more work, but you can always start the club on your own, then after seeing your initial turnout, find who is dedicated and collect your fellow board members. If your club isn't getting the support you thought it would, don't worry! If you keep working diligently and spreading the word throughout your time at your high school, you will surely but slowly grow to a size you're happy with. Even with 12, 10, or 3 members, your club can be successful! You can still do volunteer events, walk in the homecoming parade, and attend school board meetings and town halls in your city. Keep advertising every meeting and be sure to be clear that everyone is welcome, and that club dues are not required.



- If you're receiving hate for being active, report it immediately. Your school should have an anti-bullying policy in place, and you should be able to report any kind of online or in person harassment. Remember to be calm when coming to talk about bullying and have evidence and the full name of the person. If this is more extreme than bullying, like a death threat, an online threat of violence, or a threat from someone who is known to be violent, report it to your school resource officer, the police officer you should have on campus. Or, if you don't have a school resource officer, report it to the police non-emergency line, explain your concerns, and have the full name of the person who has threatened you ready.

## Finding a Sponsor

At least at high schools, clubs typically need a *sponsor*. A sponsor is the teacher or faculty member willing to help with the administration of your club and most importantly lend their room to your club for meetings.

### Step 1: Have proof you're dedicated.

Have your club as far down the submission process as possible before consulting a sponsor. Have a list small group of people interested, perhaps on a sign up sheet or petition, to prove that this club is worth your prospective sponsor's time and that there are dedicated students that will run it.

### Step 2: Approach the teacher.

If you have teachers in mind who might want to sponsor the club, find a way to approach them and do so professionally; don't disrupt their class, don't disturb their lunch time, and explain things slowly and present all information printed out, like the constitution. You can also email the teacher, sending all important information and a summary of the club. Be patient waiting for a teacher response, and have things pre-planned. You can say things like "We'd like to host meetings every Monday for an hour after school, but this is flexible if a different day is better for you." or "We'd like to begin meetings on August 1st, but we can change dates if another works better for you." Emphasize your flexibility above all else to improve your chances of approval.

### Step 3: Go through all your options.

If the teachers you have chosen cannot sponsor the club, and you feel like you're running out of options, don't be scared! Try to ask a guidance counselor or an administrator to email to all teachers, asking who is available to sponsor the club. Or ask a teacher who supports you but can't sponsor to ask other teachers who is available. Ask who the new teachers are- there most likely young and friendly, and probably don't have any clubs because they're new! See if your school has an online billboard you can post to, and ask a teacher to post on it, asking for someone who can take xx amount of time for your club.

### Step 4: If you can't use the school, go somewhere else.



You don't need school approval to start a club on your own. To find a meeting place outside of school campus, try your public library; most of these have meeting spaces that are public and free for you to use. Just advertise the club at the school and online, then meet at the library and talk to students there. If you need to be 18 or older to get a meeting time, ask a parent, sibling, or older friend to sign up for you!

*Of course, as a sidenote: if you do end up in a situation where your school doesn't allow your club to organize on school grounds, let us know by contacting us through our website. There may be things we can do to help you.*

## **Budget**

It's tough to organize much of anything if your club is strapped for cash. There are several ways you can generate funding for your club, and which one is right for you depends on the conditions of the area you live in. It is important to have a good understanding of your situation (what regulations your school requires, how many people are in your club, etc.) in order to select the right choice.

## **Fundraising Opportunities**

The main way most MFOL branches will probably raise most of their money is through holding fundraising events. There are several different types of fundraising events, but keep in mind that all of them will require varying amounts of effort from club members. Try not to pick one that's too involved if your club isn't big enough.

## **Spirit Nights**

Local restaurants - especially small businesses - are often agreeable to holding "spirit nights". Spirit Nights are events where your club drives business to a restaurant in exchange for the restaurant giving you a portion of the profit that your business brought them. There are a plethora of ways you can incentive people going to the restaurant, but the most effective one by far will be convincing sympathetic teachers at your school to provide extra credit for attending the Spirit Night and purchasing a meal. They do not require a large amount of club members to run, but there are some things to keep in mind:

- Make sure to shop around. Certain restaurants will give you better deals than others.
- Also take into account the quality of the restaurant. It's hard to get most anybody passionate about going to somewhere gross, even if it is for a good cause. Pick a place that most people would actually want to go to.
- Make sure your spirit nights aren't so frequent that they annoy both the people attending and the restaurant hosting. Try for four per year at most, spaced out equally from each other. If you absolutely need money for something beyond that, make sure to make clear what specific need you're fundraising for.

## **Merchandise**



Merch can be a decent source of income for local MFOL branches. T-Shirts are an obvious option, but try to expand beyond that if you can. Examples of merch you can make can be pins, buttons, posters, or hoodies that are specifically branded with your MFOL branch's name or logo. Make sure you sell these at a decent enough profit to rake in enough money to make a substantial effect on the club's budget.

## Grants

Grants (gift payments organizations give to clubs) are also an important way to get money in for your club. There is a virtually [infinite number of organizations](#) that provide grants for local clubs making positive change in the community. Keep a lookout for them, and make sure you jump on every opportunity you get to apply for them. Have at least one person always looking for new grant opportunities.

## Keeping Track of Funds

There are many ways to keep track of funds, but the easiest, most-straightforward, and widely used way is to simply use an Excel spreadsheet. [An example one can be found here](#), and it has all the basics of what you would need to keep track of club money. Of course, if you know of a more efficient way to go about it, or your school has special regulations about how it must be done, do that instead. It's all about what works for you.

## Club Administration

Obviously, the backbone of the club is going to be the actual way in which you run it. In order to run the club in a fun and productive way, there are several things you need to keep in mind.

### Have a plan.

There should never be a time where you go into a meeting and have no idea what you're talking about. In order to make sure you're always prepared, work with the leaders in your club to create an agenda well in advance of the next meeting. Have enough content to fill at least one hour, and try not to go beyond two hours if at all possible. An example agenda is available [here](#). Additionally, it's important to always leave your club meetings with a call to action. Whether they're supposed to RSVP to an event, or sign a petition, or bring something for next time, leaving all the meeting attendees with something to do after every meeting goes a very long way to creating an image of professionalism and cultivating club loyalty.

### Promote your meetings.

Whether on the school news, social media, or simple word of mouth, make sure people are aware of your meetings. [We've provided an example flyer to use as a model](#) (made with [Canva](#)), but you can come up with anything you want. Always be on the lookout for people you believe may be interested, and ask them directly to come.



## Have rules.

Running organizations is complicated. It's important to have rules and procedures in place to avoid potential conflict and chaos. An example club constitution is provided for you [here](#), but, as always, it may be incompatible with the rules of your school or the goals you have. If that is the case, make sure to draft an similarly-detailed replacement. Having a system in place to handle conflict and to keep people accountable is absolutely necessary to keep things running smoothly.

## Have a way to communicate.

It's important that your club has one and only one app to communicate on to minimize confusion and mistakes. It is important that the app you choose satisfies the following requirements:

- It must be **inclusive**. Something like iMessage isn't a good choice; it excludes Android users entirely. Make sure whatever app you use is available on multiple platforms.
- It should be accessible from **phone and desktop**. Some people don't have phones, and others don't have dedicated computers. To ensure everyone can access your chats at all times, make sure the app you choose satisfies this requirement.
- It should have a **flexible notification system**. March for Our Lives Austin uses GroupMe for communication along with a healthy dose of email. Other options include Discord, which is used to communicate with larger chapters of the MFOL community, and Slack, which is used to communicate with national.

## Have a way to assign jobs to club members.

It is more important than anything to have a clear sense of who is doing what. There needs to be a way you assign tasks to club members and keep track of how close they are to being completed. There is a huge list of other task management tools listed on the resources page. Whatever you end up using, make sure it adheres to the same three requirements we had above for communication services: it needs to be **inclusive**, available on **phone and desktop**, and it must have **flexible notifications**.

## Dealing with the Press

If your club gets big enough - especially if your town or school is small - there's a non-trivial chance you'll be contacted by some press. While we strongly recommend [contacting us](#) before doing anything else, here's a few rules of thumb for handling the situation:

## Screen people who speak to the press.

If the press would like to speak to you, whether on the radio, on a TV interview, or a quote for written news, you'll want to be sure the person they are talking to is going to deliver the right



message (i.e. isn't crazy). You need people who know what they're talking about, who aren't shy, and have diversity in the group who is speaking.

After you've done that, there are some more specific instructions for each medium.

### **For TV -**

If they're on camera, recorded or live, the person they are talking to should be calm under pressure, know their content well, and know the right language to use. The dress code, depending on the show, may be professional, or it may be better to wear your club merch. Which one is appropriate depends on the occasion, as we'll discuss later.

### **Radio Shows -**

Whether live or recorded, the person going to the radio station should have a clear, loud, and understandable voice. They should have notes or be well versed in what topic they are talking about. Dressing in casual clothes, like your club shirt and clean dark jeans is nice. Don't send more than two people to a radio show if you can.

### **Print and Online Media -**

Whether being interviewed by local newspapers, magazines, or blogs, the person speaking should be knowledgeable on their topic, well spoken, and understandable. You should know if you're taking pictures before hand, but one way or another it's good to send a diverse group of well dressed people wearing gear from your club or March for Our Lives.

### **Other Info -**

No matter who's going to speak to the press or what type of press they're speaking to, you should definitely do some practice interviews beforehand. If you're advertising an event, the potential interviewee needs to know a few things like the back of your hand:

- The event's date and time.
- Where the event is located.
- The event's purpose.
- The names of the organizer and any high-profile guests that are coming.
- Any sponsors you have.
- What inspired the event in the first place.

In all cases, though, you will also need to know the five pillars of March for Our Lives outlined on the [website](#), and in [the example constitution provided earlier in this toolkit](#).

Finally, it's important to know your audience. If you're talking to someone who runs a blog who you're talking on a podcast, you can be more laid back and realize you're talking to people your age with your interests. If you're going on a local news channel, it's better to dress more professionally and speak with the *big fancy words*<sup>TM</sup>.



Of course, as stated at the beginning, we always recommend you [contact us](#) before doing anything else. This kind of thing can be overwhelming, and we absolutely want to help you.

## **Direct Action**

Once you've gone through everything else, you're also going to want some pointers on what to actually do. There are infinite possibilities, and the bulk of your activities will ultimately depend on the creativity of you and your club members. However, there are some surefire ways to participate in the movement and lend your voices and hands to the cause.

## **@ MFOL ATX**

Of course, there's us! We're consistently working on projects and events for the future and we are perpetually in need of assistance from other dedicated students in order to accomplish our goals. Our events are always announced on our [blog](#) and on our [calendar](#). If you've reached out to us, you've also probably been invited to our Discord server, where we discuss the bulk of our activities and talk about most of our volunteering opportunities. When working with us, volunteer hours for the [Bright Futures Scholarship](#) are always available, so make that known to your club members at every opportunity.

Beyond us, though, you can embark on your own projects:

## **@ Your School**

Your school is the next most obvious venue for hosting events and raising awareness. What's most important to remember is that even if an event you host/participate in doesn't directly help in ending gun violence, it will increase the reputation and notoriety of your club, which will help you get more members in the long run.

## **Homecoming Parades**

Most American high schools and colleges have Homecoming Parades. It's a simple thing to participate in, and constructing a homecoming parade float can be a fun activity to increase club camaraderie and present yourself to the rest of the school. Given how early in the year they typically take place, it's a good way to start the year off by making the school aware of your presence.

## **Community Nights**

If you live in a community that is favorable to gun reform, or is frequently wracked by gun violence itself, it may be useful to hold community nights at your school to have roundtable discussions with community members and public figures about the gun violence issue and how to solve it. This has the effect of both allowing a candid conversation about the gun violence problem and also making your club a known positive force in the community.



## @ Political Offices

While your club - just like MFOL Austin- *should not* officially endorse political candidates, a huge way to get involved on an individual level is to volunteer for the campaigns of gun sense candidates. There are plenty of places where you can find them listed in your community; your local Moms Demand Action branch likely has compiled a list of candidates who are favorable to gun reform. If not, manually research people in and running for the following offices to see if they are pro-gun reform:

If they are, go volunteer for them, and encourage other members of your club to do so too. As of the 2017-2018 school year.

It is important to separate the volunteering your club members do for political offices from normal club activities. Try not to appear as if the club itself is sponsoring a particular candidate on school grounds and during school hours, as that can create some unsavory situations with school faculty. That said, volunteering for candidates is probably the most effective way you can be involved in the fight, as it will more directly result in the reforms that we're looking for.

## Club Resources

Listed here are resources that can help you run your club.

## Communication

- [Discord](#)  
Discord is a communication app. Don't be confused by the "gamer" branding - it's perfectly adequate for everybody. It's free to download and use on both your computer and phone. It's got options to talk through text, video chat, and voice call. You can have almost an endless amount of people join, and the moderator of the group can keep things organized in channels. Every server (group chat) has a general channel for chatting, but you can also organize different channels for teams and projects and topics. It's easy to share access to each server through a link and host meetings online through voice calls.

## Task Management

- [Trello](#)  
Trello is a task management app and website that allows you to organize the tasks you need to complete. Its like a to-do list, where you can have a goal and break that goal down into all the steps that need to be taken to accomplish the goal. You can assign the tasks to different people and then share the to-do list with your club members! This is free option and great to keep things organized.
- [Todoist](#)  
Todoist is another useful system for managing tasks. It's intended for more individual people than groups, but can still be a useful tool to fill the gaps where Trello can't, or if



you dislike Trello entirely. It's main feature is "natural language processing", meaning you can tell Todoist you need to "take out the garbage next thursday" and it understands exactly what you mean without having to enter in the date manually.

- [Remind 101](#)

If you've been in high school any time over the last three years, you're probably familiar with this one. Use this only when you need to remind the *entire club* about an announcement or event.

## Graphic Design

- [Canva](#)

Canva is a free tool used to make flyers and posters. If you don't have someone on your team experienced in Photoshop or graphic design, it is incredibly useful to make high-quality graphic content.

## Social Media

In terms of Social Media, make sure your club has, at minimum, a consistently and constantly updated Twitter. A Facebook page isn't required, as those tend to be targeted to older folks and not high schoolers. However, other, more teenage-friendly services, like Instagram and Snapchat, are highly recommended to have as well.

