

Helpful Hints for NIA Branch Meetings

Before the Meeting

Set a date and time when multiple iTeams will be in town. Program supervisors are often willing to let us know when the most iTeams will be briefing. It's hard to suit everybody; if necessary prioritize instructors who haven't been able to attend a meeting recently. Branch and WMI staff are welcome to attend, as are administrators. A dual meeting format with a larger open session followed by a smaller one exclusively for current members can be appropriate.

Pick a location that suits the numbers you expect. Avoid large spaces with small groups. Figure out chairs, etc. in advance. Run your plan by the local program staff to keep them informed. Often they'll help spread the word.

Publicize the meeting well in advance. A month out is not too early to start. Put a flyer on the NIA (and any other) bulletin board. Ask the Branch Rep Coordinator to add the event to nolsinstructorassociation.org. Post on the NIA Facebook Group, and NOLS Talking. Invite NOLS staff that live in the area. If you're planning on hosting a meeting after getting out of the field, do as much of this as possible before you go in.

Arrange for refreshments. Beer is a good attractant, but should be accompanied by a non-alcoholic option and ideally some hors d'oeuvres. The NIA will provide up to \$30 as many as three times per operating season. In order to be reimbursed you will need to submit receipts to the Treasurer. See below for more specific instructions.

During the Meeting

Take Notes. Arrange in advance for a volunteer to take Notes. If none are forthcoming, do your best to write as you facilitate. Our goal is to publish Notes from each meeting on our website. These are important historical records of what transpired, as well as a great way to pass feedback to the Administration. John Gans, Scott Roberston, and Marco Johnson all read the Notes we publish regularly.

Over the past year, the NIA has been criticized several times for publishing Meeting Notes that include inaccuracies. This may be somewhat inevitable. We record individual's opinions. These can be based on misunderstandings. It's not realistic for us to fact check every utterance at a Branch Meeting. That having been said, we are instituting two new procedures in an effort to minimize this:

1. Please use this template for recording your notes:<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CLyfl5FdfG02EtQJ9Q3iriH8yBZU7bWzBxc>

[uvRm4qqY/edit?usp=sharing](#). The best practice is to open this, then create a copy of it. Move this new file into the Meeting Notes file on the NIA Google Drive. Then rename it, using the NOLS location, season, and year. (e.g. “Northeast Summer Meeting 2015”).

2. Once Notes have been recorded, two Board Members are required to read through them before they are posted on the website. Board Members may add editorial notes, or attempt to fact check when necessary. Marco Johnson has been willing in the past to help us with the latter.

Don't record anything in your Notes that you know isn't true. If people are making assertions that seem doubtful to you, you can phrase them in the form of a question. e.g. “An instructor in attendance was curious if rumors about the EDT preferring a four year faculty turnover rate are true. Can any EDT member comment on this?”

Suggested Agenda:

1. Give a plan and set a time limit. Keep meetings between 60 and 90 minutes, moving discussion along so a variety of topics get covered. Often a small number of folks feel especially passionate about a particular issue. If so, you can schedule a follow-up meeting with that group.
2. Introductions. Introduce yourself and your role: Board member, Branch Rep, etc.
3. Give a brief history of the NIA. Explain our role. Key points are: Founded in 1975, independent from NOLS, represent Instructors (field and classroom) to the EDT and BoT.
4. Describe two or three of our current issues. This is usually enough to get the conversation going. Don't try to provide an exhaustive list. *See the most recent Talking Points document.*
5. Open discussion. We'd like to find out about issues affecting members present, especially those that may be particular to that location or a specific course type. It's also important to find out what's working well so we can support that and apply those ideas elsewhere. It helps our lobbying efforts if we can offer both positive feedback along with the constructive.
6. Invite feedback for the NIA on our priorities, strategy, and how well Faculty feel we are representing them.

Recruit. I can't emphasize enough how important this is. Our influence with the EDT and BoT is a direct function of our numbers. Have a laptop handy and cued up to:

<http://www.nolsinstructorassociation.org/join>. We're trying our best to channel everyone to either Auto-renewal (levels 1 or 3) or Lifetime membership (level 5). In order to select Auto-renewal, folks will have to pay by credit card, and they'll have to enter their own information on our website. ***You should have them do this at the meeting, since the process is not self explanatory, and many people need a little tech support.***

Since we're encouraging folks to Auto-renew, we should see fewer and fewer people paying by cash or check. Nevertheless, you should have an envelope and some change available for

people who want to pay by cash. If someone pays cash, record the date, the level of membership they purchased (one year, associate, or lifetime) and their **e-mail address**.

Membership Incentives. We've learned that folks like to have something physical to show for their contribution. These gifts are also a great way for us to publicize our cause. A new instructor sees that their CL using an NIA coozie and it starts a conversation. Communicate with the Visibility Coordinator (allie.maloney@gmail.com) well in advance of your meeting so that she can send you a package of coozies, t-shirts, and belt buckles.

Stickers are free for all. Don't wait for folks to take one. Hand them out to each person present.

People who chose the 1 year option (\$30) receive a coozie.

Those who sign up for Auto-renewal (\$20/year) get a coozie and a t-shirt.

Lifetime members get a coozie, t-shirt, and belt buckle.

After the Meeting

Clean up, so we'll be welcome to do it again.

If you were unable to post your Notes to the Google Drive, or if you recruited members who paid by cash or check: Email the Branch Rep Coordinator, david.r.durant@gmail.com. Attach your Notes them so that they can eventually be posted on our website. Include membership info (membership level, email address) for anyone who paid cash or check in the body of the e-mail so that the new members can be entered into the website. This step is crucial, because the membership database on the website is the ultimate record of our support.

If you purchased refreshments: email the Treasurer, daren_opeka@nols.edu. Attach photographs of your receipts for refreshments and any explanatory comments.

If you've collected checks: Mail them directly to the Meridian Trust Federal Credit Union, 873 Main St. Lander, WY 82520. Endorsed "for deposit only". Include on the check the NIA's account number: #72545-7.

If you've collected cash: Please don't send cash in the mail. You can collect all the cash and then write a personal check for that amount. Alternatively you can pass the funds along by charging your card via paypal. We can only accept funds in US Dollars.

THANK YOU for taking the time to do this. Face to face meetings are the best way to communicate with our members, but they take effort and follow through. You are an NIA hero.

Membership FAQ

Why join the NIA?

If you care about NOLS, you should care about the NIA.

Got an idea you want heard by the folks that make the big decisions? From the mouths of Instructors to the ears of Trustees, we are *the* conduit for bottom-up feedback at the school.

Specific examples of what we've accomplished are available under the [Home](#) tab. If any of these things rings true for you, consider joining. Our efficacy is a direct function of the size of our membership.

Who can join?

Current and former NOLS/WMI Instructors. If you are a graduate of an IC or ITC, the NIA wants you, no matter how many weeks you work each year.

Which membership level is right for me?

Anyone who has worked in the past three years, or has accepted a contract for future work, is eligible to be member, and should select either level 1, 2, or 5 above.

If you've taken an IC or ITC but haven't worked yet, you are eligible to be an associate member. Select level 3 or 4 below.

If you are Senior Staff (having worked 60 weeks or more), but you haven't worked in the last three years, you are eligible to be an associate member. Select level 3 or 4 below.

What's an associate member?

The NIA holds periodic votes to determine the President and Board Members, as well as our stance on particularly important issues. Associate members aren't eligible to vote.

Why do I have to pay dues?

The money we collect from members funds all of our operations: visibility projects including posters, hats, stickers and tee shirts; refreshments during meetings; this website, et cetera. We don't receive any funding from NOLS.

Even more importantly, a contribution is the means by which we differentiate members from non-members. Otherwise we could claim that all instructors are automatically NIA members. The Board of Trustees and Executive Director Team would likely find this unconvincing.

We think our dues are quite reasonable: only \$20 per year if you renew automatically. That's less than \$2 a month. By means of comparison, Walmart Associates pay \$60 each year in dues to their representative organization (O.U.R. Walmart).

What's best for the NIA?

If your main goal is to support the NIA, then sign up for either automatically recurring payments (level 1 or 3) or a lifetime membership (level 5). Our support is gaged by our membership, and it's hard to keep the numbers up when folks keep expiring.

I'm already a member. How do I switch to recurring payments?

1. Log into the site. (Top right corner.)
2. Return to this page, and click on the "Edit your member profile" link right at the top.
3. Click the "Change membership level" button.
4. Members should change to level 1, associate members should change to level 3.

Can I cancel recurring payments in the future?

Sure. Canceling is easy. Just follow the steps outlined in the question above, but change to a level that isn't associated with automatic payments (2, 4, or 5). You will be notified by an automatically generated email before your credit card is charged.