COLLEGE of AMERICAN PATHOLOGISTS
Advocacy

Building Community

The Key to State Pathology Society Sustainability

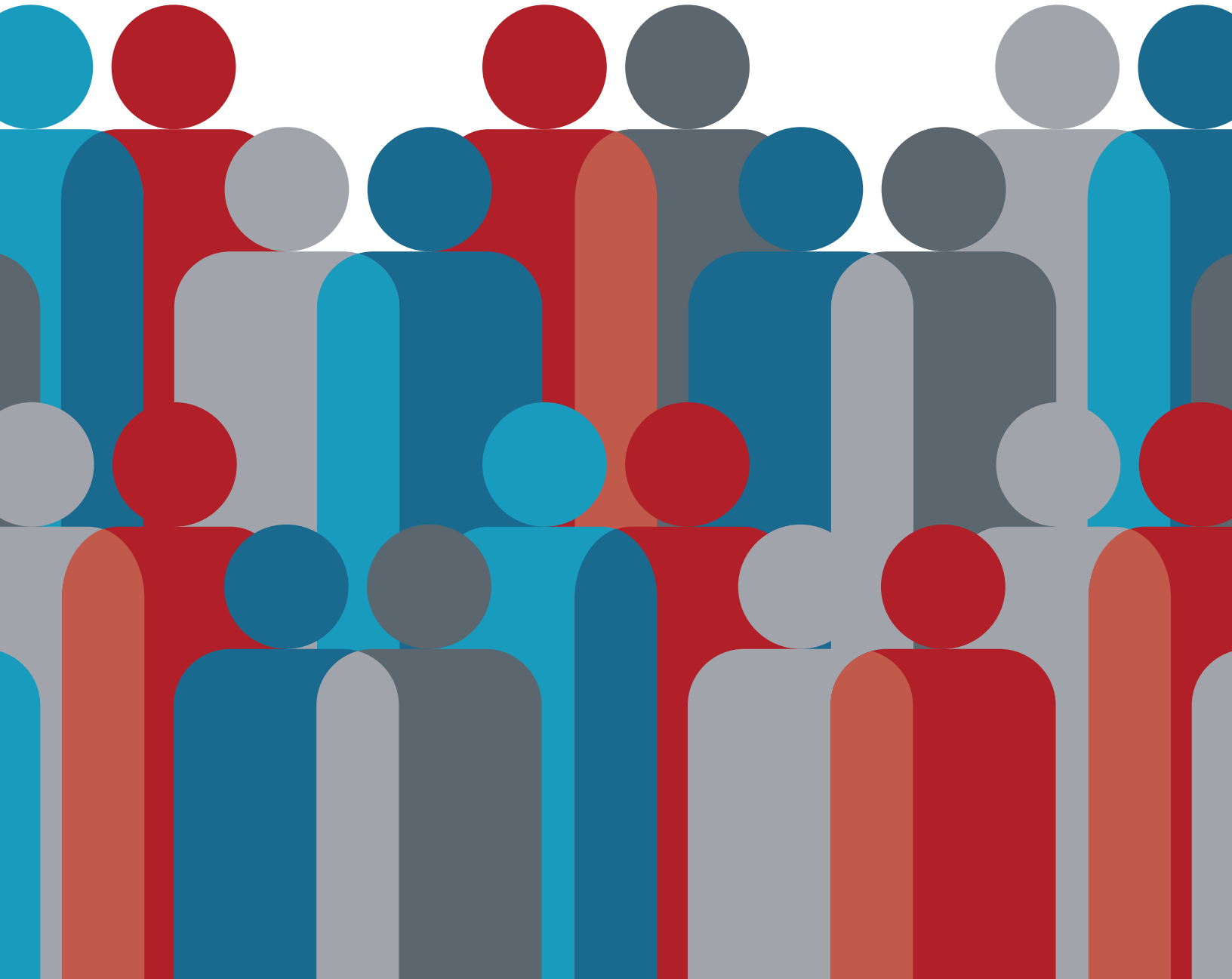




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INTRODUCTION

Why Community Matters

State pathology societies (SPSs) exist to represent, support, and connect their members, but none of that is possible without community. Whether you're building a brand-new state society from scratch or managing a well-established organization with hundreds of members, the strength and sustainability of your group depends on more than bylaws or board meetings. It depends on people feeling connected to one another, to their profession, and to a shared sense of purpose.

Too often, societies struggle with the same challenges: low event turnout, dwindling volunteer pools, or stagnant membership numbers. These aren't just logistical issues; they're signs of a weakened community core. The good news? Every society, no matter its size or budget, has the power to build (or rebuild) a thriving culture of engagement.

This guide is designed to offer practical ideas that any pathology society can put to work. Some strategies will be easy to implement right away. Others may require longer-term planning. But all are focused on the same goal: helping your society become a place where members feel seen, valued, and inspired to participate.

Whether you're a founding member trying to recruit your first dozen colleagues or a president of a long-standing society looking to deepen connections, this guide is for you.

Let's get started.



CHAPTER 1

Understanding Your Members

Before you can build community, you have to know who your community is. Every state pathology society is made up of individuals with different motivations, needs, and levels of engagement. Understanding your members, both current and potential, is the foundation for every other strategy in this guide.

Why This Matters

When societies don't take time to understand their members, they risk becoming out of sync: Offering events no one attends, sending emails no one reads, or focusing advocacy on issues that don't resonate. On the other hand, when members feel that their interests are reflected and their time is respected, they're far more likely to stay involved and invite others in.

This kind of understanding doesn't happen by accident. It takes intentional listening.

PRO TIP:
Don't just survey active members. Reach out to lapsed or non-renewing members to learn why they disengaged.

Start With a Survey
(Even a Simple One)

No matter your society's size, a quick annual survey can reveal a lot (we've provided a sample survey in Appendix B). Keep it short: 5–10 questions is enough. Ask what topics members care about, how they prefer to engage (eg, in-person, virtual, email-only), and what keeps them from participating.

For small or new societies, this can be as simple as a Google Form sent out in an email. **For larger societies**, consider offering an incentive (such as a raffle entry) to boost response rates.

Segment Your Members
(Not Everyone Wants the Same Thing)

Once you've gathered input, look for trends. Most societies find they serve a mix of:

- **Early-career pathologists:** Often looking for mentorship, education, and networking

- **Mid-career professionals:** Likely juggling multiple commitments, so putting a high value on efficiency and targeted content
- **Late-career and retired members:** May be less interested in CME, but eager to give back or stay connected

Tailoring opportunities based on these natural groupings can increase relevance and participation.

Create Member Personas
(Optional, but Powerful)

Some societies go a step further and create "member personas"—fictional but realistic profiles that help you plan with real people in mind. For example:

Dr. Patel, 38
Works at a community hospital; has two kids; values concise, practical CME and likes virtual options. Rarely attends in-person events due to time constraints.

Thinking about Dr. Patel when planning a webinar series or newsletter can help ensure you're meeting the real-world needs of the people in your society.

Make Listening Ongoing

A once-a-year survey is great, but it shouldn't be the only time you hear from your members. Set up regular touchpoints:

- Quick polls in newsletters or social media
- Post-event feedback forms
- Open Q&A sessions with board members
- A suggestion box on your website

Members are more likely to speak up when they believe their input leads to action.

TAKEAWAY
Knowing your members isn't just about demographics or job titles. It's about understanding their priorities, pain points, and aspirations, and letting that knowledge guide what your society offers. The better you know your people, the stronger your community will be.

CHAPTER 2

Welcoming and Onboarding New Members

The moment someone joins your society is the moment their impression starts to solidify. A strong welcome builds momentum and shows that membership means more than just paying dues. It's the first step in turning a new member into an engaged one.

Whether you're welcoming your tenth member or your 200th, what matters most is that new members feel seen, informed, and invited to participate.

Why Onboarding Matters

Many SPSs focus so heavily on recruitment that they overlook what comes next. But without an onboarding process, even a simple one, new members can feel unsure about how to get involved, what benefits are available, or who to contact. That uncertainty can quickly lead to disengagement.

TIP FOR SMALL OR NEW SOCIETIES:

A personal message from a board member expressing appreciation and outlining next steps goes a long way.

Start With a Warm Welcome

Within the first week of joining, every new member should receive:

- A personalized welcome email (from the president or membership chair)
- A member guide or "welcome kit" outlining key benefits, upcoming events, and how to get involved
- A short list of who to contact with questions about common topics (dues, CME, committees, events)

Highlight the Value Early

New members are often wondering, "Was this worth it?" Show them the value up front:

- Promote your most popular member benefits (discounted CME, networking events, advocacy updates)
- Share testimonials from current members
- Offer a small "welcome perk," such as free event access, a featured member spotlight, or a call with leadership

Pair Them With a Contact or Mentor

When possible, match new members with an established member, board member, or committee chair. This doesn't need to be a formal mentorship, just a friendly point of contact who can help answer questions and provide a sense of connection.

TAKEAWAY

New members don't just need to be welcomed—they need to be guided. A thoughtful onboarding process helps members feel like they belong, understand what's available to them, and know how to participate. That early connection is one of the most powerful predictors of long-term engagement.

Invite Immediate Engagement

Don't wait six months to ask new members to get involved. Give them simple, low-barrier ways to plug in right away, such as:

- Attending an upcoming webinar or virtual meet-and-greet
- Joining a committee or task force (even just to observe)
- Submitting a short bio for a "Meet the Members" post

These small actions create momentum and make people feel part of something.

For Larger Societies: Automate Where Possible

If your membership is growing fast, consider a simple automation strategy:

- A timed email welcome series over 4–6 weeks
- Scheduled check-ins (eg, at three months and at one year)
- An FAQ or orientation video on your website

Automation helps ensure consistency without overburdening volunteers.

CHAPTER 3

Creating Meaningful Engagement Opportunities

Sustainable societies aren't built on passive membership; they thrive when members are actively engaged. But for engagement to last, it must be meaningful. Members need to feel that their time and contributions matter, whether they're participating in a committee or simply responding to a poll. This chapter outlines ways to offer a range of opportunities that meet people where they are in terms of time, interest, and experience level.

Define What Engagement Looks Like

Not all engagement is formal or time-intensive. Members engage in different ways:

- Reading your society's newsletter
- Attending a meeting or webinar
- Volunteering on a committee
- Contributing to advocacy efforts
- Mentoring a colleague
- Sharing society content on social media

Recognizing and supporting all types of engagement helps members see that there's more than one way to participate.

Offer Entry Points for All Levels of Involvement

Some members are ready to jump into leadership. Others may just be testing the waters. Create options for both.

For low-commitment involvement:

- Join a discussion thread or virtual roundtable
- Participate in a one-time task or working group
- Respond to a quick member poll

For deeper involvement:

- Serve on a committee (eg, education, membership, legislative)
- Help plan an event or webinar
- Contribute to newsletters, social media, or presentations

TIP FOR NEW SOCIETIES:
Start with one or two working groups aligned with your goals—for example, an Education Task Force or Membership Committee. Let those efforts grow organically as more members show interest.

Make Committees Functional and Inviting

Committees can be a strong foundation for member involvement; they can also be a source of frustration. Keep them healthy by:

- Setting clear expectations and goals
- Limiting meeting length and frequency
- Providing updates to the full board or membership
- Publicly recognizing the work being done

Encourage new members to sit in before committing. A simple "committee preview" invitation helps lower the barrier to joining.

Utilize Micro-Volunteering

Micro-volunteering gives members a way to contribute in short bursts—no long-term commitment required. Examples include:

- Reviewing a document draft
- Helping with event registration
- Sharing feedback on a proposed initiative
- Writing a testimonial or blog post

These opportunities are great for early-career members, busy professionals, or anyone new to the society.

Make Engagement Visible

The more members see others participating, the more likely they are to join in. Highlight engagement through:

- Member spotlights or quotes in newsletters
- Recognition at meetings or on social media
- "Who's involved?" callouts for committees or projects

Visibility reinforces community and shows that participation is valued.

Check in Regularly

Create a rhythm of communication with your members. Ask:

- Are there enough opportunities to get involved?
- Do you feel your contributions are appreciated?
- What would make engagement easier?

Regular feedback ensures your efforts stay aligned with member expectations.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL



TAKEAWAY

Engagement is not one-size-fits-all. When you offer a variety of ways for members to get involved, and make it easy for them to say yes, your society becomes more dynamic, inclusive, and resilient. Meaningful engagement turns *members into contributors* and *contributors into community.*

CHAPTER 4

Hosting Engaging Events

Events are one of the most visible ways in which a society engages its members and one of the best tools for strengthening community. Whether it's a large annual meeting or an informal virtual gathering, events create shared experiences, spark new connections, and reinforce the value of belonging.

You don't need a big budget or a packed ballroom to make an impact. What matters is relevance, accessibility, and a sense of purpose. Review the event checklist in Appendix D to help plan your event.

Offer a Mix of Formats

Different members have different needs. A well-rounded event calendar might include:

- Annual or semiannual in-person meetings with CME and networking
- Webinars or virtual panel discussions on timely topics
- Social gatherings like happy hours, coffee chats, or wine tastings
- Hybrid events that combine in-person and remote access

FOR NEW OR SMALLER SOCIETIES:
Start with one well-planned event and build from there. A virtual townhall or member Q&A can be a great first step.



Keep Events Member-Centered

Every event should be designed with your members' interests and constraints in mind. Ask:

- What topics do they want to learn more about?
- What days/times work best for attendance?
- Do they prefer formal presentations or open discussions?

Use pre-event surveys or post-event feedback to guide your planning. Members are more likely to attend when they feel the event was created for them, not just by the board.

Incorporate Networking Into the Agenda

Connection is a key driver of retention and engagement. Even in virtual settings, make time for interaction. You can offer:

- Dedicated networking breaks
- Icebreaker questions or breakout rooms
- Social "after hours" sessions following formal content

TIP:
Invite board members or volunteers to act as hosts during events, welcoming new faces, facilitating conversation, and encouraging follow-up.

Bring in Guest Speakers With Purpose

A well-chosen speaker can elevate any event. Consider inviting:

- Experts in pathology or health care policy
- CAP leaders or partner organization representatives
- Legislators, hospital leaders, or local influencers
- Retired members with insights and stories

Speakers should be relevant to your audience and your society's mission. Bonus if they help draw in new attendees or sponsors.

Make Events Accessible and Inclusive

Small changes can make a big difference in participation:

- Offer virtual or recorded options whenever possible
- Choose venues with ample parking and accommodations
- Rotate locations to include different geographic areas
- Keep pricing reasonable and offer student/resident discounts

Accessibility builds goodwill and reinforces that your society is open and welcoming to all.

Follow Up and Stay Connected

An event shouldn't be the end of a conversation. Afterward,

- Send thank-you messages and slides or recordings
- Share photos or highlights in your newsletter
- Ask for feedback and suggestions for future topics
- Encourage attendees to join a committee or attend another event

Good follow-up turns a one-time attendee into a repeat participant.

TOUCHSTONES OF ENGAGEMENT & PRIDE



TAKEAWAY

Events, big or small, are powerful community builders. When you focus on relevance, connection, and follow-through, your society's events will become more than dates on a calendar. They'll become touchstones of engagement and pride.

CHAPTER 5

Building a Culture of Recognition

Recognition is one of the simplest, most cost-effective ways to build community—and one of the most overlooked. When members feel seen and appreciated, they're more likely to stay engaged, volunteer again, and speak positively about your society to others.

This chapter explores ways to foster a culture where recognition is routine, meaningful, and inclusive.

Why Recognition Matters

In busy professional lives, members often give time and effort to their SPS without expecting anything in return. But when those efforts are acknowledged, even informally, their contributions are validated, strengthening their connection to the group.

Recognition also:

- Reinforces the behaviors and values you want to promote
- Encourages others to get involved
- Boosts morale during challenging periods

Build Recognition Into Everyday Practices

You don't need an awards banquet to make recognition part of your culture. Small, regular gestures go a long way.

- Thank volunteers by name in newsletters or at events
- Acknowledge outgoing committee chairs at the ends of their terms
- Include a "Member of the Month" spotlight on your website or social media
- Highlight event speakers or organizers publicly

TIP:
Keep a running list of active volunteers or contributors. This makes it easier to ensure no one is overlooked.

Offer Formal Recognition Opportunities

Consider creating structured ways to recognize contributions:

- Annual awards (eg, Service Award, Emerging Leader Award)
- Certificates of appreciation for speakers, mentors, or board members
- Digital badges or recognition on your website
- Honor rolls or lifetime achievement spotlights

Make sure your criteria are clear and your selection process is transparent.

Personalize Whenever Possible

A personalized note or public thank-you can mean more than a generic certificate. When recognizing someone, be specific about what they did and why it mattered. For example:

> *"Thank you, Dr. Lee, for stepping up to organize our first hybrid event. Your attention to detail made it a success."*

This type of feedback not only acknowledges the action, but also reinforces that it made a difference.

Recognize New and Less-Visible Contributors

It's easy to celebrate long-serving leaders, but don't forget the newcomers or those working behind the scenes:

- The resident who live-tweeted your last meeting
- The member who shared your event with colleagues
- The volunteer who quietly managed registration or logistics

Widening your lens helps build an inclusive culture where everyone feels their contributions matter.

Make It a Shared Effort

Encourage your board and committees to look for opportunities to recognize others. You might even:

- Assign a "recognition lead" within committees
- Set a goal of one recognition per month
- Invite members to nominate peers for appreciation

WHEN RECOGNITION BECOMES EVERYONE'S JOB, IT BECOMES PART OF YOUR CULTURE.

SENSE OF BELONGING



TAKEAWAY

Recognition doesn't have to be grand to be effective. When done thoughtfully and consistently, it creates a sense of belonging, reinforces engagement, and helps your members feel like they're truly part of a community. Make appreciation a habit, not a headline.

CHAPTER 6

Effective Communication Strategies

A strong community depends on clear, consistent communication. It's how you inform, connect, and inspire your members, and it plays a critical role in keeping your society active and relevant.

Good communication isn't just about sending updates. It's about building trust, encouraging dialogue, and making every member feel like they're part of something bigger.

Establish a Regular Communication Rhythm

Members shouldn't have to guess when they'll hear from your society. Aim for consistent outreach, even if it's brief:

- Monthly newsletters summarizing events, news, and opportunities
- Event reminders spaced out over several weeks
- Quarterly messages from leadership highlighting progress and upcoming goals

TIP:
Consistency matters more than frequency. A simple, well-timed monthly email is better than an irregular flood of announcements.

Keep It Relevant and Respectful of Time

The best communication is targeted and purposeful. Respect your members' time by focusing on:

- Clear subject lines and calls to action
- Key dates and deadlines at the top
- Short, scannable sections with links to more information

If every message offers something useful—an event, a survey, an opportunity—members are more likely to open the next one.

Use Multiple Channels Strategically

Different members prefer different modes of communication. When possible, use a mix:

- **Email:** Your primary tool for announcements and newsletters
- **Website:** A central hub for events, leadership info, and member resources
- **Social media:** Ideal for quick updates, member highlights, and event promotion
- **Live announcements:** Given at meetings or webinars to reinforce key messages

NOTE:
If your society uses a member management platform (like MemberClicks or WildApricot), take advantage of built-in communication tools to track engagement and manage contact lists.

Make Two-Way Communication Easy

Members should feel encouraged to respond, ask questions, and offer ideas. Simple ways to open the door:

- Include a "Reply to this email with questions" line
- Add a suggestion form to your website
- Offer quick polls or feedback buttons in newsletters
- Hold periodic listening sessions or office hours with board members

Personalize When You Can

Personal touches build connection. Even small efforts, like addressing members by name in emails or tailoring messages to specific audiences (eg, residents, committee members), can increase engagement.

For larger societies, consider segmenting your mailing list so members only receive what's most relevant to them.

Communicate the 'Why' Behind the 'What'

Don't just tell members what's happening; explain why it matters.

- Instead of "Join our upcoming webinar," try "Join our upcoming webinar to learn how proposed legislation may affect your lab operations."
- Instead of "Renew your membership," try "Renew your membership to stay connected, earn CME, and support local advocacy."

Framing messages this way reminds members of the value your SPS brings.

TAKEAWAY
Communication is the thread that weaves your community together. When it's clear, consistent, and thoughtful, members stay informed, feel connected, and know how to engage. Get this right, and the rest of your engagement efforts will go much farther.

CHAPTER 7

Partnering for Success

Strong societies don't operate in silos. By forming strategic partnerships, you can amplify your impact, access new resources, and strengthen your credibility. The right partners can help your society reach more members, achieve advocacy wins, and support your programming goals.

This chapter outlines how to identify, engage, and sustain meaningful partnerships, even if your society is small or newly formed.

Identify Potential Partners

Start by considering which groups share overlapping goals or audiences. Useful categories include:

- **Your state medical association—**a key ally for legislative and regulatory work
- **Local hospitals and health systems—**especially those employing or contracting with pathologists
- **Medical schools and residency programs—**excellent sources of new members and event collaboration
- **Vendors and sponsors—**diagnostic companies, lab suppliers, and others who support pathology
- **Other state medical specialty societies—**such as radiology, oncology, or surgery groups with shared interests
- **The CAP—**connect your SPS to national expertise, advocacy resources, and a broader network of support for advancing pathology at the state level

TIP:
Make a list of existing contacts or institutional relationships. You may already have a warm lead to start with.

Focus on Mutual Benefit

Partnerships should be win-win. Consider what your society can offer and what you hope to gain. For example:

- You offer visibility to vendors in exchange for event sponsorship
- You provide speakers or CME to medical schools in exchange for access to residents
- You support the state medical association's advocacy work and gain a stronger voice in legislation

Clarity about mutual benefit helps set expectations and builds trust.

Start With Small Collaborations

You don't need a formal agreement to begin. Consider co-hosting a webinar or roundtable, or inviting a representative from your partner organization to speak at your meeting. An easy way to collaborate is to promote one another's events/initiatives—especially if you simply share content for each other's newsletters and/or websites.

These small steps build goodwill and demonstrate reliability, a strong foundation for deeper collaboration.

Build Long-term Relationships

Good partnerships are based on more than convenience. Invest time in the relationship:

- Schedule regular check-ins with key partners
- Invite partners to your events, not just as vendors, but as guests
- Include relevant stakeholders in advocacy planning or educational efforts

These relationships become especially valuable during high-stakes moments, like opposing harmful legislation or launching a statewide initiative.

Managing Vendor Partnerships

Vendors are more than sponsors. They're often deeply invested in your members' work. When working with them:

- Offer clear sponsorship packages (eg, event tables, speaking slots, logo placement)
- Thank and recognize vendors publicly
- Allow time for meaningful interaction between vendors and members
- Maintain transparency and fairness in how vendors are chosen and acknowledged

REMINDER:
All vendor involvement should align with your society's ethical standards and conflict of interest guidelines.

Partner With Your State Medical Association

Your state medical association can be one of your most valuable collaborators. Their advocacy teams often have extensive lobbying experience and connections, as well as established relationships with legislators and regulators. They generally also have a wealth of legal and policy resources.

Ways to work together:

- Attend their annual meeting or legislative day
- Participate in specialty society coalitions
- Co-sign letters or position statements
- Align on shared advocacy priorities

These alliances can boost your visibility and lend your society greater influence.

PARTNERSHIPS



TAKEAWAY

You don't have to do it all alone—and with the right partners, you won't need to. Partnerships expand your society's reach, capacity, and relevance. When built on trust, mutual benefit, and shared purpose, they become a powerful part of your community-building strategy.

CHAPTER 8

Cultivating Leadership and Succession

No matter how engaged your current board is, leadership transitions are inevitable and necessary. Strong societies anticipate this by actively developing future leaders, sharing institutional knowledge, and creating a culture where stepping into a leadership role feels supported, not overwhelming.

Leadership development doesn't require formal training programs or long tenure. It begins with simple, intentional steps to identify, encourage, and prepare members for greater involvement.

Make Leadership Visible and Approachable

One of the easiest ways to develop future leaders is to make leadership feel accessible. Many members won't consider board service simply because no one has ever asked them or they assume it's only for senior physicians.

TIP:
If your society is small or newly-formed, leadership can be flexible. Don't be afraid to define roles based on member strengths and availability.

You can lower the barrier by:

- Posting board and committee roles on your website or in newsletters
- Highlighting the influence leaders have ("Help shape policy priorities" vs. "Join the board")
- Featuring short interviews with current leaders about what they've learned and enjoyed
- Occasionally opening board meetings to all members as observers

Create On-ramps to Leadership

Most members won't go from attendee to board member in one step. Offer smaller, defined roles that build confidence and familiarity. Give them the chance to:

- Chair a subcommittee or short-term task force
- Organize a single event
- Serve as a liaison to residents or another organization
- Draft a policy position or society statement
- Lead a new member orientation or outreach effort

These "on-ramp" opportunities allow members to explore leadership in manageable ways, building experience along the way.

Mentor and Support New Leaders

Leadership isn't just about the title, it's about feeling prepared. Societies thrive when experienced leaders invest in those coming up behind them. Consider these ideas:

- Pair new board members with mentors during their first year
- Share key documents like bylaws, prior meeting minutes, and annual reports
- Hold an annual board orientation (even if virtual and informal)
- Encourage past leaders to remain involved as advisors (not gatekeepers)

FOR NEWER SOCIETIES:
Documenting processes early makes succession smoother later. A simple transition checklist can go a long way.

Keep Elections Transparent and Inclusive

Open calls for nominations—and clear explanations of the process—help ensure a diverse and representative leadership. Avoid relying solely on informal recruitment or personal networks, which can unintentionally leave out qualified members. And be sure that you're announcing elections with sufficient lead time and context.

Consider:

- Offering sample role descriptions and estimated time commitments
- Encouraging self-nominations and affirming that early-career members are welcome
- Promoting gender, racial, and geographic diversity in leadership recruitment

Plan for Turnover, Not Just Continuity

Leadership succession isn't just about maintaining what works. It's about creating room for new energy, perspectives, and ideas. Embrace term limits, celebrate transitions, and build a culture where change is seen as progress, not loss.

PATHWAY TO LEADERSHIP



TAKEAWAY

Leadership development isn't a one-time task—it's a mindset. When you identify talent early, offer clear paths to get involved, and support members every step of the way, you create a leadership pathway that can sustain your society for years to come.

CHAPTER 9

Strengthening Advocacy Through Engagement

Advocacy is one of the most powerful functions a state pathology society can perform. Whether defending scope of practice, influencing reimbursement, or reducing regulatory burdens, effective advocacy protects the profession and patients alike.

But strong advocacy doesn't happen behind closed doors. It requires engaged members, aligned messaging, and persistent relationship building with decision-makers. This chapter focuses on how societies of all sizes can activate their members and build momentum around legislative efforts.

Why Advocacy Matters

Policy decisions at the state level can have lasting effects on pathologists' ability to practice:

- **Scope of Practice Expansion:** Legislation may allow non-physician providers to perform or interpret pathology services
- **Reimbursement and Prior Authorization:** Payment policies or insurance procedures can limit access or undervalue services
- **Regulatory Burdens:** New rules or inspections may increase administrative load or restrict lab operations

Societies that engage early and often in advocacy are better positioned to protect their members' interests and influence outcomes.

Activate Your Members

Even a small group of committed members can make a big difference. Help them get involved:

- Create an **advocacy alert system** for when quick action is needed (emails, texts, social media)
- Share **legislative updates** regularly so members stay informed

- Offer **advocacy training** at your annual meeting or in a webinar
- Provide **scripts and templates** for calls, emails, or testimony

TIP:
Emphasize that *lawmakers want to hear from their constituents*. One well-timed message from a local physician can carry more weight than a policy brief.

Build Legislative Relationships

Don't wait for a crisis to reach out to legislators. Advocacy is more effective when you're already known. To foster relationships,

- Invite elected officials to speak at events or receive recognition
- Schedule regular visits with lawmakers (virtual or in-person)
- Include elected officials in newsletters or social media

Your state medical association can often assist with coordination or introductions.

Involve Members at All Career Stages

Make advocacy accessible to everyone.

- **Residents and early-career pathologists** can participate in letter-writing campaigns or social media outreach
- **Mid-career members** may be well-positioned for in-district meetings
- **Senior members** often bring credibility and experience that legislators value

Each group brings a different voice and strength. The more diverse your advocates, the stronger your message.

Align Messaging and Goals

Effective advocacy requires speaking with one voice. Make sure members know your top legislative priorities, why the issues matter to patients and the profession, and what specific action(s) you're asking lawmakers to take.

Provide talking points and sample language to help keep the messaging consistent.

Celebrate Wins and Share Effects

Whether you help defeat a harmful bill or secure a small regulatory change, tell your members what happened, how your society was influential in the change, and why their engagement mattered.

This builds advocacy pride and shows members their voices count.

INFLUENCE CHANGE



TAKEAWAY

Advocacy is more than just a board responsibility. It's a community effort. By educating, empowering, and activating your members, your society can influence change, safeguard the profession, and build unity around a shared mission.

CHAPTER 10

Maintaining Momentum Year-Round

Keeping members engaged throughout the year requires intention, variety, and consistency. When momentum drops, it's harder to rally support for events, advocacy, or leadership development. But when your society maintains regular touchpoints and provides ongoing value, members remain connected even between major meetings.

Build a Year-Round Engagement Calendar

Avoid the trap of "all at once" programming. Spread your activities throughout the year to create consistent (yet diverse) connection points:

- Quarterly virtual events (eg, webinars, case discussions, networking chats)
- Monthly newsletters or updates
- Mid-year surveys or listening sessions
- Recognition moments (eg, Member Spotlights or Volunteer Thanks)

This doesn't require a huge lift. Even modest engagement, consistently delivered, keeps your society top of mind.

Offer Ongoing Education

Educational programming shouldn't be limited to annual meetings. Use a mix of delivery methods and content types, such as:

- On-demand recorded content (eg, 15-minute hot topic updates)
- Live virtual Q&A sessions with experts
- Short "coffee break" webinars during lunch hours

Consider polling members quarterly to guide topic selection. Timely content keeps members engaged and positions your society as a valuable source of professional development.

Create Communication Rhythms

Avoid only reaching out when there's an event to promote. Members should hear from your society regularly.

- Send monthly emails with news, updates, and engagement options
- Publish the occasional "President's Message" or leadership update
- Post on social media to recognize milestones or invite feedback

A predictable cadence of communication builds trust and keeps members informed.

Maintain Visibility of Leadership and Committees

Let members see the work happening behind the scenes. Use your newsletter to share committee accomplishments, meeting highlights or takeaways, and upcoming leadership opportunities. This transparency reinforces accountability and celebrates contributions—and members will feel that they're being included in the governance of your SPS.

Encourage Small Touchpoints

Sometimes, it's the small things that make a big difference:

- A "Happy Birthday" or congratulatory email from the society
- A quick note welcoming someone back to a meeting
- A post sharing info about a member's publication or achievement

These touchpoints are especially important for early-career and first-time members.

Reengage the Less Active

Consider occasional outreach specifically targeting less active or lapsed members, such as:

- "We miss you" emails with updates and ways to reconnect
- Personal calls or messages from board members
- Surveys or polls asking what would bring them back in

This shows that every member matters, not just the most active.

TAKEAWAY

Momentum doesn't require constant activity. It requires meaningful, steady connection. When members feel appreciated, hear from your society regularly, and see clear ways to stay involved, they're more likely to stay invested. Year-round engagement creates a reliable, resilient base of support. That is the foundation for a thriving community.

CHAPTER 11

Measuring Impact and Adapting

Building a thriving society requires more than just doing good work. You also have to understand what's working, what's not, and where to improve. Measuring the effectiveness of your programs and adapting accordingly helps ensure that your efforts remain relevant, strategic, and member-focused.

This chapter outlines how to assess engagement, evaluate effectiveness, and adjust your approach for continued success.

Why Measurement Matters

Without evaluation, it's easy to fall into the trap of continuing to do things "the way they've always been done"... even when they're no longer serving your members well. When you take time to gather feedback and review your data, you can:

- Identify which efforts deliver the most value
- Pinpoint areas where members are disengaged
- Make informed decisions about where to focus resources
- Show transparency and responsiveness to your members

Track Engagement Data

Start by regularly collecting and reviewing basic engagement metrics.

- **Event attendance:** Who's showing up? Are numbers growing or shrinking?
- **Email open and click-through rates:** Which messages get the most attention?
- **Membership trends:** New members, renewals, lapsed members
- **Website traffic:** Most visited pages, time on site, bounce rates
- **Volunteer participation:** Committee involvement, task force sign-ups, micro-volunteering

This data gives you a baseline. Over time, trends will tell a story about your members' behaviors and preferences.

> TIP:
> **Don't just track numbers, look at *who* is engaging. Are you reaching early-career pathologists? Rural members? Previously inactive members?**

Collect Qualitative Feedback

Numbers don't tell the whole story. Pair your metrics with direct member input through a variety of methods:

- Brief post-event surveys (keep them short—three to five questions)
- Annual or semi-annual member satisfaction surveys
- One-on-one conversations or interviews
- Focus groups on key initiatives

Ask what members liked, what they'd improve, and what they need more of. Open-ended responses often yield the most valuable insights.

Use Feedback to Drive Decisions

Feedback only matters if you act on it. Use what you learn to adjust your programming or communication strategies; try new tactics for engagement, and sunset those efforts that have low impact. You can also use member input to guide your decisions as you refine your society's member benefits.

Even when feedback is critical, it's a gift. It shows members care enough to help you improve.

> TIP:
> **When you make changes based on input, tell your members! Say, "You asked for more virtual events, so here's what we've added."**

Set Benchmarks and Goals

Evaluation isn't just reactive, it's also strategic. Set clear goals and use metrics to track progress. Some examples might be:

- Increase event attendance by 15% year-over-year
- Grow resident membership by 20% in two years
- Launch three new engagement initiatives annually

Tracking against specific goals gives your board and committees a shared sense of purpose and accountability.

Embrace Flexibility

Not every idea will work the first time. That's okay. Community-building is an evolving process. When something doesn't land,

- Look for root causes (timing, promotion, format?)
- Gather feedback and try again with adjustments
- Be transparent; members respect humility and persistence

The ability to pivot based on feedback is a sign of strength, not failure.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY



TAKEAWAY

Strong communities are responsive communities. By consistently measuring what you do, listening to your members, and adapting your efforts, you build a society that remains relevant and resilient. Evaluation isn't about judgment, it's about growth. And the more you grow alongside your members, the more sustainable your community will become.

CONCLUSION

A Thriving Community Is a Lasting Legacy

The work of building community is never done, and that's what makes it meaningful. Every email you send, event you host, committee you launch, or conversation you start has the potential to bring members closer together. Over time, those efforts create a society that not only serves its members but sustains itself.

Whether your SPS is new or decades old, the strategies in this guide offer a starting point. They can be scaled up or down, adapted to your local culture, and tested over time. What matters most is consistency, creativity, and the belief that members are more than names on a roster. They're the heart of your society.

Remember:

- Start with what you have. You don't need a big budget to build connection.
- Listen often. Your members will tell you what matters and what doesn't.
- Celebrate progress. Every small step is a sign of growth.

Community isn't a checkbox. It's a culture. And when you cultivate that culture with care, your society becomes more than sustainable—it becomes indispensable.

Thank you for the work you do. Let's keep building.

Let's get started.



Appendices

Appendix A: Sample New Member Welcome Email

Subject: Welcome to the [Your State] Pathology Society

Dear [First Name],

Welcome to the [State] Pathology Society! We're thrilled to have you as part of our community. Whether you're a long-time pathologist or just starting out in your career, our society is here to support your professional journey.

As a member, you'll receive updates on state advocacy efforts, invitations to educational events, and opportunities to connect with colleagues across the region. We hope to see you at our upcoming meeting on [Date]. More details to come!

Thank you for joining us. If you have questions or ideas, feel free to reach out to [Contact Name] at [Contact Email].

Sincerely, [President Name]
President, [State] Pathology Society

Appendix B: Annual Member Survey Template

1. How satisfied are you with your overall membership experience?

2. What types of programming are most valuable to you? (Select all that apply)

   - Advocacy updates
   - CME/educational webinars
   - Networking opportunities
   - In-person meetings
   - Resident support or mentorship

3. How often would you like to hear from the society?
4. Are you interested in volunteering (committees, event planning, advocacy)?
5. What topics would you like to see addressed in future programs?
6. What's one thing we could do to better serve you?
7. Would you recommend membership to a colleague? (Yes/No)
8. Any additional comments or suggestions?

Appendix C: Committee Role Descriptions

Membership Committee

- Recruit and welcome new members
- Track engagement and outreach efforts
- Recommend retention strategies

Education Committee

- Plan webinars, workshops, and CME sessions
- Identify speakers and topics of interest
- Evaluate educational programming impact

Legislative/Advocacy Committee

- Monitor state policy developments
- Coordinate advocacy campaigns
- Liaise with the CAP State Affairs team and medical association partners

Appendix D: Event Planning Checklist

3–6 Months Before

- Confirm date, format, and venue/platform
- Set budget and pricing
- Invite speakers and vendors
- Develop promotional materials

1–2 Months Before

- Open registration
- Promote through email and social media
- Confirm logistics and A/V

1 Week Before

- Finalize attendee list
- Send reminders and prep speakers

Day of Event

- Arrive early for setup or login
- Test technology
- Greet attendees and monitor flow

Post-event

- Send thank-you notes and survey
- Share photos or highlights
- Debrief with planning team

Appendix E: Member Engagement Tracking Sheet (Example)

Member Name	Joined	Events Attended	Committee	Last Contacted	Volunteer Interest
Dr. Smith	2021	3	Education	Feb 2024	Yes
Dr. Patel	2023	1	N/A	Apr 2024	No
Dr. Jones	2020	5	Advocacy	Jan 2024	Yes

This sheet can be maintained in Excel or AMS software and helps track who's actively engaged and who may benefit from outreach.

Apprendix F: Post-event Survey

- How would you rate the overall quality of the event? (1–5 scale)
- How relevant was the content to your professional needs? (1–5 scale)
- How effective were the speakers/presenters? (1–5 scale)
- What did you enjoy most about the event?
- What suggestions do you have to improve our next event?