



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

New Chapter Membership Model

- 1. Q. What is the new “Chapter Membership Model,” and why is it being instituted now?**
 - A. During the course of the past year, a Membership Models Task Force of the ONS Board of Directors has been reviewing various aspects of the ONS membership experience to determine ways to continually improve that experience and to position the Society for future growth and sustainability. Their work took into consideration significant amounts data, including member feedback derived from a number of sources. Among other key outcomes, this research revealed that members who were engaged in ONS at the local level tended to be much more engaged at the national level as well, demonstrated higher levels of overall satisfaction, and were much more likely to retain their membership for a number of years. However, currently only about one-third of all ONS members belong to their local chapter. These factors contributed to the task force recommending, and the board approving, a new membership model whereby chapter membership is no longer an optional add-on experience but automatically included as part of ONS membership. \$10 will be added to the ONS dues amount to cover the chapter membership, and that amount will be rebated back to each member’s chapter.

- 2. Q. When will the new Chapter Membership Model go into effect?**
 - A. The transition to the new model will begin in late spring, and is expected to be completed by July 1, 2013. Please note that this date may change, due to the complexity of the transition of this project in terms of membership records database changes, technical upgrades to software programs, and individual chapter issues.

- 3. Q. How was the \$10 amount arrived at?**
 - A. The Board’s Membership Models Task Force collected and analyzed data regarding dues from all ONS chapters and considered the financial implications of various dollar amounts. The dues amount charged by chapters varies greatly, with some chapters charging no dues, some minimal dues, and some up to \$40. The average amount charged by all chapters is about \$21, with the amount depending on what products and services each chapter offers, and whether or not the dues amount covered attendance at the chapter’s dinner meetings. The task force and Board wanted to keep the dues amount as reasonable as possible while still providing chapters with enough revenue to maintain their current level of operations. A financial analysis showed that, because of the large influx of new members, virtually all chapters will realize a significant increase in dues revenue, even at the lower amount. Keep in mind that the average chapter’s membership will triple. So, for instance, if your chapter currently has 50 members, and you charge \$20 for dues, your dues revenue is \$1,000 per year. With 150 members paying \$10, your dues revenue will now be \$1,500.

- 4. Q. Our current chapter dues are much more than the \$10 Chapter Membership Model dues. Are we permitted to charge our chapter members a supplemental dues amount to off-set that difference?**
- A. No, chapters may not charge an additional dues amount. However, keep in mind that if you have not previously charged your members separately for the chapter dinner meetings, education courses, special events, etc., you are able to do so.
- 5. Q. Is the chapter board permitted to pay for the new \$10 dues for any of our members who may object to paying the additional dues in order to keep them as members?**
- A. This is not advisable. Keep in mind that the Chapter Membership Model allocation of \$10 per member is not a separate dues payment by the member—it's all included in one ONS membership dues rate that a member will pay each year when she/he renews (or joins) ONS. ONS does not have a mechanism to handle separate \$10 contributions from chapters to pay on behalf of individual members in this regard.
- 6. Q. We are one of the few ONS chapters that currently charge a higher chapter dues (\$40 for example), and that's to help offset dinner costs because we're located in a large metropolitan area. We crunched the numbers using the new \$10 dues rebate, and we will experience a shortfall in chapter dues revenue. We feel this puts us in an unfair financial situation. How will ONS deal with chapters in our situation, and will there be any financial assistance offered?**
- A. Before the implementation of the new Chapter Membership Model, more than two-thirds of all ONS members did not belong to a local chapter. So, on average, each chapter should reap the benefits of an expanded membership of about triple its current membership. This large growth should provide a significant influx of new chapter-member dues rebates (\$10 each) to the chapter. Yes, a few ONS chapters have been charging higher dues (say, over \$40 per member). Our research shows that most of those chapters charge higher dues to pay for individual member's meals at chapter dinner meetings, and some of those chapters are located in large metropolitan areas where dinner costs are high. Those chapters will need to look at other expense/revenue models or ways to cover these costs, such as charging attendees for dinner meeting meal costs.
- 7. Q. Once the new Chapter Membership Model goes into effect, how will the ONS national office rebate the funds to the chapters, and how often?**
- A. The rebate funds will be electronically transferred to the chapters' bank accounts. This will be done on a quarterly basis.
- 8. Q. How will ONS members who are not yet members of a chapter be assigned to a chapter?**
- A. Those members who already belong to a chapter will remain affiliated with that chapter. Members who are not yet members of a chapter will be assigned to the chapter within the zip code of their preferred mailing address, as listed in the ONS database. This will be the default "home" chapter.
- 9. Q. What if I want to be a member of a different chapter? Will members be able to change from the default chapter assignment?**
- A. Yes. The default assigning of chapter membership based on the zip code of the preferred mailing address will be done so as to assign all members to a chapter in the most efficient way. But if a member lives in territory covered by one chapter but works in that of another chapter, the member will be able to change their chapter membership assignment.
- 10. Can ONS members belong to more than one chapter?**
- A. Yes, although there would be an additional \$10 fee for each additional chapter. This is because that money goes directly back to the chapter to support their operations and member services.

- 11. Q. If a member elects to belong to more than one chapter, does she or he have the option to determine which chapter is their “home” chapter?**
- A. Yes. Although ONS members will initially be assigned a default chapter based on their preferred mailing address zip code, they can change their assigned home chapter to a different chapter of their choice. If a member belongs to multiple chapters, she or he will be able to designate which should be their home chapter.
- 12. Q. The Chapter Membership Model will change how we recruit and retain our members. Will there be any detailed communication information, material, and/or training for our chapter’s board and, more specifically, for our chapter’s membership chair, on how to communicate the benefits of the change to our members?**
- A. Yes. The ONS membership, marketing, and public relations staff are currently working on a communication strategy that will first go out to all chapter leaders explaining in detail the Chapter Membership Model. This piece will cover the reasons for the change and provide suggestions on how chapters should communicate the new model to their local members. Additionally, ONS will follow up that communication with a message to all ONS members spelling out the benefits of chapter membership that all members will now be able to enjoy.
- 13. Q. Should we cease all current chapter membership recruitment and retention efforts?**
- A. No. Your chapter offers important programs and services at the local level so it is important to encourage your members to renew their ONS membership, as well as to encourage potential members to join ONS and your chapter. This will also be true once the new model goes into effect; the only difference will be that there will no longer be a separate membership for ONS national and for the local chapter—it will be combined into one ONS membership. For now, all chapters should continue their operations as usual.
- 14. Q. Can we still recruit chapter membership for our special categories, such as non-RN, healthcare professionals?**
- A. Not for a chapter-only membership. As is currently the case, individuals are not eligible for local chapter membership unless they are ONS members. But ONS does have member categories for non-RNs (“Associate Member”), as well as students. So you should continue to encourage these types of potential members to join ONS and thereby your chapter.
- 15. Q. How will our chapter know who’s joined or renewed through ONS national? Will we receive a membership report each month? And what will that report look like?**
- A. ONS is currently working with our database vendor to identify the best option for providing membership rosters to the chapter leadership. In any case, chapter leaders, presumably the chapter’s membership chair, will receive regular updates that will show who has renewed/joined the chapter. Our goal is to provide at least monthly reports, but we are looking at the possibility of providing weekly or daily reports, if feasible. Please note that chapter rosters will be available only in electronic format, but authorized chapter officers will be able to access and download current rosters for their use directly from the ONS website or Virtual Community.
- 16. Q. Will there be any restrictions on how chapters use the rebated Chapter Membership Model dues money?**
- A. No additional restrictions will be made. Chapters will need to remain compliant with existing ONS chapter policies that pertain to chapter finances as stated in the *Chapter Policy Manual* and the *Chapter Treasurer Handbook*.

- 17. Q. If a potential member asks our chapter if she/he can join just our chapter and not ONS, what are we supposed to tell them?**
- A. It has always been a requirement for members to first join ONS in order to be eligible to join a chapter. Simply tell the potential member that chapter membership is already included with ONS membership and the two are not separable. It is important to express the value of ONS membership as a whole and that there are many benefits and advantages to ONS membership, including chapter affiliation.
- 18. Q. How are we to handle objections from some of our chapter members, meaning those who come to us and say they will not join ONS at the national level, or say they will drop their membership if this new Chapter Membership Model goes into effect?**
- A. Since it is already a requirement for local members to be ONS members, again it's important to express the value of ONS membership as a whole, and that there are many benefits and advantages to ONS membership which include chapter affiliation. Most nonprofit organizations have a universal chapter structure, so ONS is simply transitioning to the norm in order to provide chapter affiliation to all members. Belonging to just ONS at the national level or belonging to just an ONS chapter and not ONS at the national level are not options.
- 19. Q. After the new Chapter Membership Model is in place, will ONS memberships remain on a month-anniversary system (based on the month the member joins)?**
- A. Yes, the paid-thru date for each individual's ONS membership will remain the same, based on the month in which they joined. The chapter membership paid-thru date will be same as their ONS membership. Those dates will become synchronized at the member's next renewal point.
- 20. Q. When the new Chapter Membership Model goes into effect, will there be any prorating of annual dues from this current year (i.e., members who joined late in 2012)? How will that affect the transition to the new model as it relates to what portion of chapter dues will be rebated to the chapter?**
- A. This will be at the discretion of the chapter, depending on how recently the member renewed and at what amount. Keep in mind that a member may not be invoiced the new dues amount for up to 11 months from the transition start date, so there may be a lag in time from when the chapter will receive that member's next dues payment from ONS.
- 21. Q. We have a big membership recruitment campaign planned. Should we continue with that? At what point should we stop collecting local dues?**
- A. This will vary by chapter, as some currently collect dues based on the member's anniversary date, and some based on a calendar year cycle. Assuming a July 1, 2013 effective date for the new membership model, chapters should stop collecting local dues no later than May 1.
- 22. Q. Are we to assume that the chapters will no longer do the actual processing of chapter memberships, meaning if we have any potential new members, they are to be directed to ONS Customer Service, or the ONS website?**
- A. ONS wants to work in tandem with all chapters to provide user-friendly options for potential members. Potential new members should be able to complete paper applications onsite at your meetings or have the ability to join or renew by going online to the ONS website, if they prefer. After the Chapter Membership Model is implemented, there will be one standard ONS membership application for all potential members to complete. If requested by the chapter, ONS will provide paper versions of the ONS membership application, but ideally ONS prefers potential members to complete the application online.

- 23. Q. Are we to remove our chapter membership application from our virtual community site (or website), and when should we do that? Will we be provided with an official start date (Chapter Membership Model implementation date)?**
- A. Upon implementation of the new Chapter Membership Model, all previous chapter membership applications will become obsolete. This will include online as well as paper applications, so at that time they should be removed from your website and any paper versions discarded.
- 24. Q. As the chapter's treasurer, will I be provided with information on how I am to record and process chapter rebates for my regular reporting to my chapter board and for the required annual chapter treasurer's report?**
- A. Chapter treasurers should maintain their current practices and procedures for completing financial statements for your chapter board and for the chapter's year-end treasurer's report (due on January 31st of each year). Please consult the *Chapter Treasurers Handbook* for compliance requirements. The main difference will be to record chapter dues rebates (as revenue) at \$10 per new/renewed member and the dues income should be based on the date of the receipt of the new/renewed membership.
- 25. Q. What if a neighboring ONS chapter is somewhat inactive, and some of their members contact us about joining (switching over to) our chapter? Are we permitted to suggest that they change their current chapter membership to our chapter?**
- A. Yes, but please contact ONS Chapter Relations staff first. The Chapter Relations staff may be aware of active/inactive status of chapters in surrounding areas and can advise you of the situation. If a chapter is truly inactive, you may suggest to those inquiring outside members that they change their home-chapter affiliation to yours, or suggest they keep their current chapter affiliation and purchase an additional membership to your chapter for \$10.
- 26. Q. After the Chapter Membership Model is implemented, will our chapter receive a new list of all ONS members within our chapter territory?**
- A. Yes. New chapter rosters will be created and made available online to chapter membership chairs immediately following the Chapter Membership Model implementation.
- 27. Q. After the Chapter Membership Model is in place, will ONS redefine the "Small, Medium, and Large" chapter size classifications?**
- A. Yes. New category definitions will reflect the significantly increased size of all chapters.
- 28. Q. For our chapter's geographical boundaries, we've always used what was originally approved in our charter (Standing Rules) which is based on the geographic borders of several counties. Will ONS change how boundaries are defined, and if so, what method will be used?**
- A. Chapter geographic boundaries will now be defined by official USPS zip codes. Your current chapter territory will be converted from geographical descriptors (i.e. counties, parishes, towns, etc.) to USPS zip codes. Every attempt will be made to keep the existing geographical territory in place. However, some chapters will need to work with other neighboring chapters to ensure a smooth transition to certain zip codes, as we are aware of county overlaps among chapters that share borders, particularly in large metropolitan areas.
- 29. Q. If USPS zip codes will be used, that could be a problem with our chapter because we share borders with five other ONS chapters in a large metropolitan area. If zip codes cannot be matched up exactly to the existing boundaries (county lines or major roads), how are we to resolve border disputes with our neighboring chapters?**

A. In these cases, ONS Chapter Relations staff will work directly with all affected chapter boards to resolve any border disputes. Every effort will be made to ensure satisfaction with the final zip code assignment for each chapter. And keep in mind that members will have the option to change their primary chapter affiliation, regardless of how they are initially assigned by ONS.

30. Q. Our chapter is located out West in a fairly remote area of the country. Can we ask the members located in the at-large areas to join our chapter? Can we expand our territories to include adjacent, as-yet-un-served geographic areas?

A. This is possible, within reason. Please contact ONS Chapter Relations staff to discuss your specific situation. Additionally, ONS will encourage at-large members (in non-assigned chapter areas of the country) to consider affiliating with the closest ONS chapter. If a chapter wishes to expand its current zip code territories into specific at-large areas, the chapter leadership will need to petition the ONS Board of Directors for this expansion and state how they plan to serve the members in the proposed expansion area.

31. Q. Regarding the new ONS membership categories (retired member and early career member), will the chapter still receive the same \$10 rebated dues for each member in the new categories? Or will it be smaller?

A. Chapters will receive \$10 per each member, with the exception of Student Members, as students will not be charged the \$10. Students will have complimentary chapter membership, and will be encouraged to participate in the local chapter as a way of learning more about ONS at both the national and local level, and for fostering their future professional affiliation with ONS

32. Q. I have been an ONS member for a long time and, unfortunately, I live more than 150 miles from where my closest ONS chapter meets. It's not fair to charge me an additional \$10 on my ONS dues for a chapter that I will never participate in or attend meetings. Can't you provide me with an "opt-out"?

A. Unfortunately, there is not an option to opt-out of the Chapter Membership Model. The ONS Board felt that it is important for all members to belong to their local ONS chapter. Although you may not be physically able to attend many chapter functions, you can still take advantage of the nearest local chapter membership benefits, activities, and online resources through the chapter's Virtual Community. ONS will be working with chapters to develop new ways to serve and engage members who are in more remote geographical areas.

33. Q. Now that I will automatically become a member of the local ONS chapter in my area, will they be required to provide chapter services to members like me who live 150 miles away? I don't mind paying the additional \$10 dues and have it go back to the local chapter, but how do I benefit from that when I live so far away?

A. There is a good chance that your chapter's membership has significantly grown due to the new Chapter Membership Model. Contact your local chapter to find out if there is now a small group of members in your immediate area. This may lead to the chapter scheduling additional meetings or activities in your area because of the larger number of members.

Please direct any additional questions or comments you may have to chapters@ons.org.