



Mentoring: An investment in our future

Use this handbook to:

- Help identify emerging leaders and strong mentors
- Encourage and support diverse union leader candidates
- Equip unionists to help others with work-life balance
- Give members ways to get involved in union activities
- Help members understand NYSUT's organizational structures



Help identify emerging leaders and strong mentors

Many women face distinctive challenges in unions that make it difficult for them to become leaders or activists, such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment and the challenges of balancing work demands with family responsibilities. Female mentors can help address the barriers women face in moving into union leadership positions. This does not mean that women should not also have male mentors.

It is important to reassure local leaders that developing leadership among their members is not “political suicide” and that mentoring is about building support within unions. The more you can engage and involve members, the more they’re going to know about you, support you and back you up. The more you can open those lines of communication, the better it’s going to be for everyone.

Mentoring can help diversify leadership. Even when they do have mentors, women of color may still have to contend with challenges within the mentor/mentee relationship, such as differences in gender, race or organizational environment. Just as it is important to provide women with female mentors who can help them address the sexism they face, it is crucial to have mentors of color who are available to work with younger workers of color.

Activists and staff from different generations are generally very eager to learn from each other. Having different perspectives can enrich their own thinking about key issues and priorities. Increased communication between experienced and emerging leaders can lead to common understanding.



Could your local benefit from an informal or formal mentoring program for women?

Different kinds of mentoring

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring happens when people begin a mentoring relationship casually or without any outside assistance. Some people mentor naturally and see it as a part of their job as unionists.

Formal Mentoring

Unions need to be intentional about encouraging mentoring for those who face discrimination and other barriers to career advancement. Formal mentoring has traditionally taken place through one-on-one relationships. But it can also happen in a group setting like a Women's Committee and through team mentoring or mentoring circles in which group members support each other's leadership development. Formal mentoring can provide unions with a way to identify women and people of color with leadership potential and help them move into leadership roles. However, on its own, mentoring cannot remove the barriers that hinder the advancement of women and people of color. Unions need to have a broader institutional commitment to overcome these barriers.

*Mentoring is less about telling and more about asking . . .
it's about encouraging the mentee to think through
different options.*

Material in this handbook
has been adapted from
*The Next Generation: A
Handbook for Mentoring
Future Union Leaders*
— IWPR/Berger-Marks
Foundation, April 2012

Encourage and support diverse union leader candidates

Leaders within the labor movement have mentored their successors – mostly informally – since the movement began, but some union leaders believe this mentoring has been more readily available to men. Mentoring, however, may be especially valuable for women and people of color because of the specific challenges they face in advancing their careers. Mentoring helps unions diversify their leadership. Women and people of color are critical to the future of the labor movement, and developing their leadership potential is a key to its success.

Mentoring programs help unions thrive over time. They enable more seasoned leaders to transfer their knowledge and experience to younger workers and activists. Ultimately, building future leaders helps to keep unions strong.

Mentoring can especially help women, who constitute more than half the workforce but are underrepresented in the leadership ranks of unions overall. Mentoring can help by providing women with the support they need to move up through the ranks and reach the top positions. Having more women visible in leadership positions can increase women's activism in unions.

How does your local support women, including women of color, to grow?



Equip unionists to help others with work-life balance

Many women in unions need to balance their work priorities with competing family and other responsibilities. This often makes it difficult for women to hold leadership positions in unions, which generally require working long hours.

As unions think about how they mentor and train young women, they can listen to what women have to say about their particular needs and concerns. Doing so can help union leaders create programs that work for both the women and the association.

These programs may, for example, meet in places that are convenient for the women involved, or offer child care and food at meetings and events that need to happen in the evening or on the weekend. You may want to rotate the meeting locations (to make it easier for all women to attend) and to consider women's travel time when scheduling mentoring sessions.



Give members ways to get involved in union activities

The following **SAMPLE** worksheet illustrates a tool you could use to engage a female mentee in your local's activities. You can customize it to meet your local's needs.

Insert
Local Logo Here
If Available

Local Union Activities Worksheet

Here is a list of our public relations events where all members can participate:

Here is a list of our social events throughout the year. All members are welcome:

Here is a list of our committees. Please check with your _____ if you would like to get involved or volunteer for a committee:

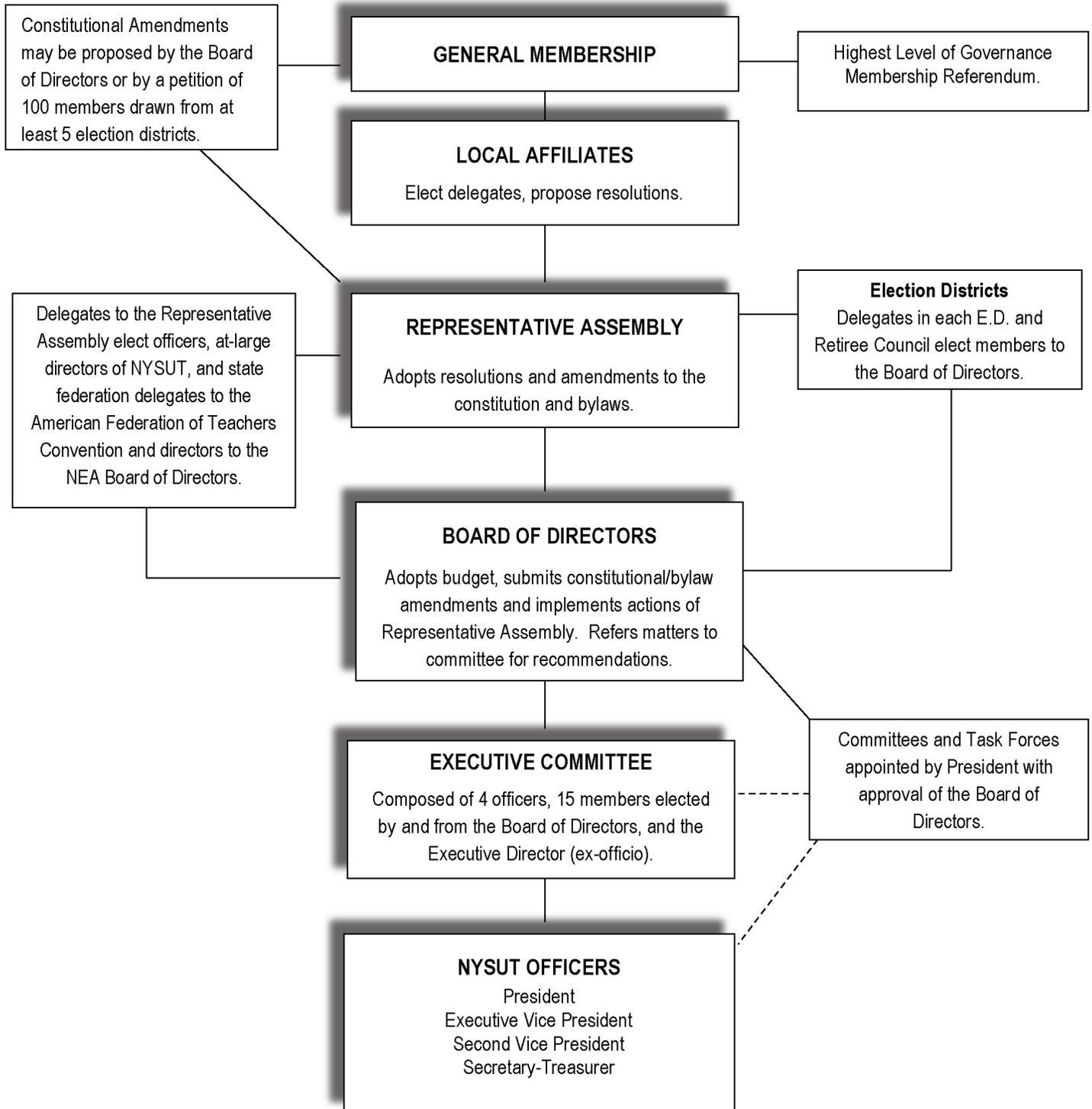
Here is our website and social media platforms where you can get the latest news about rallies, demonstrations and other opportunities to show up and speak out as one union:

Would you like to volunteer to phone bank or canvass for union-endorsed candidates? Yes

Do you have an idea to share? We want to hear it!

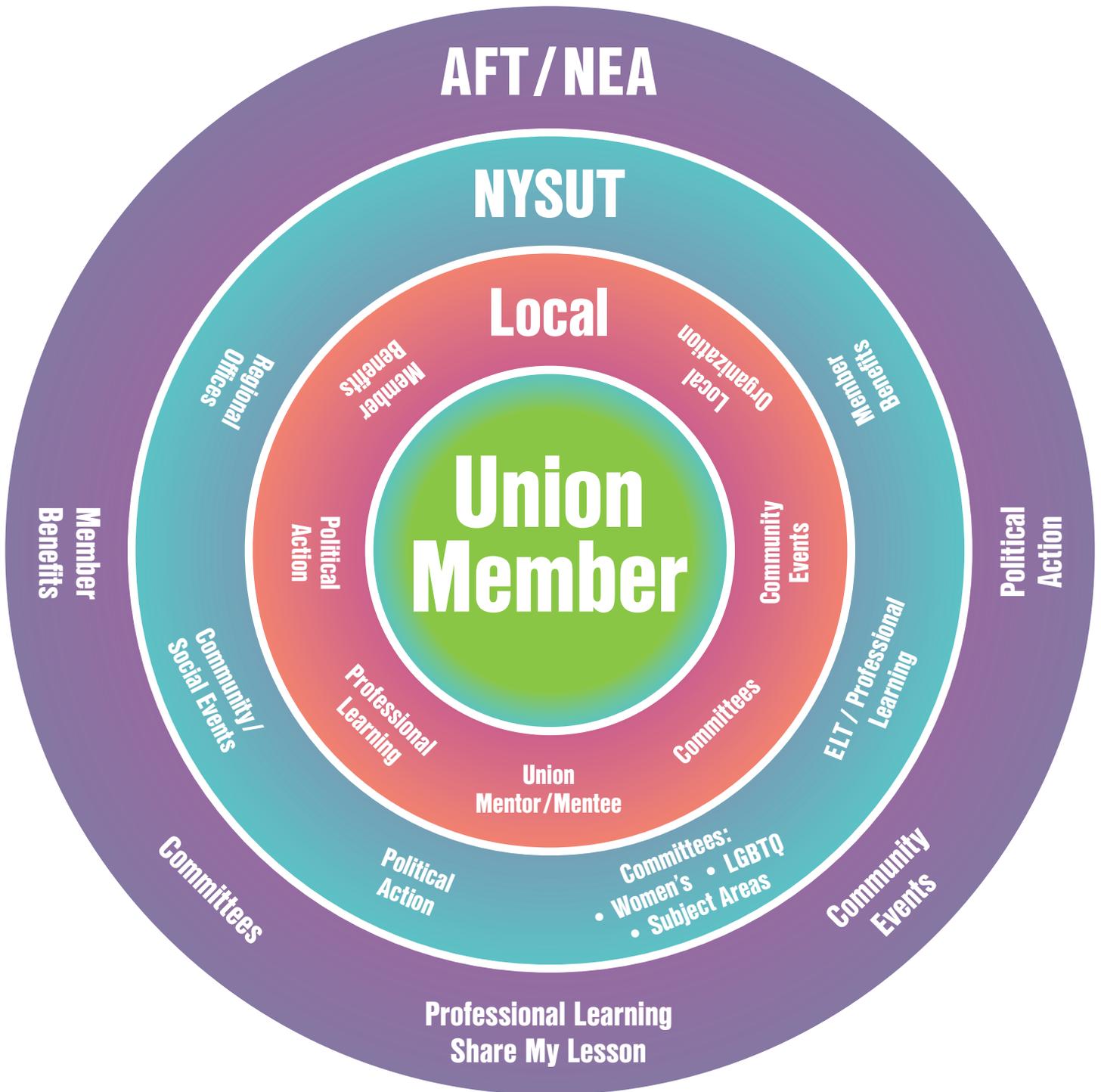
Help members understand NYSUT's organizational structures

NYSUT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



YOU AND YOUR UNION

Your local union is a member of New York State United Teachers and our national affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association. There are opportunities for you to benefit from your union membership, and to get involved, at all levels.



Appendix I: Identifying and assigning mentors

Mentoring in unions can provide a way for current leadership to help new leaders grow. Developing future generations to succeed us must be intentional to ensure organizational sustainability.

1. Identifying the emerging leader

- Active members of the executive board
- Active building representatives and delegates
- Active committee members
- Active, passionate, positive female members

2. Identifying the mentors

- A mentor could be an experienced and willing member of your organization.
- A mentor could be a retiree chapter leader from your organization.
- A mentor should be familiar with the organization's norms and culture and able to articulate and teach that culture.
- A mentor should be willing to help develop potential leaders through guidance, feedback and appropriate direction.

3. Matching mentors to mentees in a formal setting

- Allow the mentee to be a part of the decision-making process.
- Allow choices of trained mentors within your organization.
- Match leader experience and interests.

4. Informal mentoring

- Do you see something in another NYSUT woman that would make her a great leader? Tell her so and help guide her. It's that simple!



Appendix II: Tips for a successful mentoring relationship

Mentors:

- Engage the mentee in problem-solving and self-reflection
- Find trainings or union experiences that can build leadership skills
- Encourage mentees to move beyond their comfort zone
- Keep the conversations focused and on task
- Share information about your own experiences and history

Mentees:

- Be open to learning and developing your skills
- Remain open to the mentoring process
- Take time to prepare for each mentoring opportunity
- If possible, learn from more than one union mentor/leader
- Have fun with the relationship

*A mentor is someone
who allows you to see
the hope inside yourself.*

— Oprah Winfrey

Appendix III: Session structure for mentor

Instructions: Use the following talking points to help guide your session.

Update

What has happened since the last time we met?
What actions did you take and what new things did you learn?
What has become more or less clear?

Check in on any agreements from the last session

Did each of you take the action you agreed to?
What is the status?

Focus for session

What does the mentee want to focus on today?

Requests and offers

What requests do you have of each other?
What does the mentor want to offer?

Action and agreements

What action do you each agree to take between now and the next session?

Logistics for next session

Date and time for next session?
Who is calling whom?





Appendix IV: Session preparation for mentee

Instructions: Prepare for the session by giving advance thought to the following questions. Consider sending an email update to your mentor prior to your meeting. This will help focus the mentoring session.

1. What have I tried (new action or practice) since our last session?
What impact or insight did I have about it?

2. What do I want to get out of the session today?
 - What challenges or concerns do I want to address?

 - What goal area do I want to focus on?

 - What questions do I have for my mentor?

 - What requests do I have for my mentor?

3. What action do I hope to take following our session?

4. What follow-up do I want/need from my mentor following our session?

Appendix V: Mentee and mentor progress form

A progress record is a great way to measure the success of a mentoring relationship. It can help identify the most successful elements as well as potential areas for future growth and improvement.

The form can identify the mentor/mentee and describe their interests, experience and qualifications. Collecting this information and updating it on a regular basis can help create successful matches and keep track of how many members are mentoring someone and/or being mentored themselves.

SAMPLE FORM:

Mentee Information	
Name	
Title	
Work Location	
Phone	
E-mail	

Mentor Information	
Name	
Title	
Work Location	
Phone	
E-mail	

Goal 1						
Objective						
Activity	Success Measure	Timeframe	Resources Required	Cost	Status	Comments

Goal 2						
Objective						
Activity	Success Measure	Timeframe	Resources Required	Cost	Status	Comments

Goal 3						
Objective						
Activity	Success Measure	Timeframe	Resources Required	Cost	Status	Comments





In the two years since its launch, the 70-member NYSUT Women's Committee has been making its mark within the statewide union. Chaired by NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, the committee has four main goals:

- Encourage more locals to develop in-house women's committees
- Educate female members about the work of the union
- Highlight women-specific issues, including inequalities in pay, health care and education
- Involve more union women in leadership roles



The Mentoring Toolkit Committee is one subgroup of the women's committee. Charged with developing a mentoring handbook to help union leaders engage women under 40 in union activities and leadership, the subgroup incorporates all voices and reflects diversity across constituencies including educators from K-12, higher education, women of color and LGBTQ.

Learn more about the Women's Committee at nysut.org/women.



#NYSUTwomen