

USA Dance -- Branch Chapters

Guidelines for Development

Existing chapters can do outreach and expand the area being served by fostering development of Branch Chapters. Often there are outlying communities near an existing chapter that are not well served by events currently being sponsored by the Chapter. There may be interest in these areas in scheduling dances that are more convenient and potential for eventual chapter development, but the current dance community is not large enough to support a chapter

To serve this need, a chapter can host additional dances, varying their locations as interest and attendance warrant.

Another option would be to establish a “branch chapter”-- this is a more formalized approach and would be the logical choice where there are several dancers interested in forming a new chapter but insufficient community support at the present time. Your chapter benefits because all new members belong to the existing Parent chapter until such time as the “branch” is ready to break away and become a fully functioning chapter. . These members are counted as part of the Parent chapter toward any rebate program in place.

The chapter also may benefit from increased dance attendance. As the Branch group works to generate additional interest nearby, some of those new members are likely to attend Parent Chapter functions.

A group can operate as a branch of a Parent chapter for a period of up to two years as they work to generate community interest and support.

Good Places To Start A Branch

- Small towns & nearby communities - (look to population centers 30 minutes or so away from current event locations)
- Suburbs of the city
- Ethnic areas
- Other types of dance clubs such as Argentine Tango, Swing, Salsa, Mambo, Hustle, Country Western & the Ethnic dances - they may have members interested in forming a USA Dance Chapter in addition to their existing club
- Areas where a dance studio stands alone and away from your chapter

How To Begin

- The Parent Chapter should advise their Regional Vice President, Area Coordinator and Central Office of the interest in development of a new Branch Chapter.
- The existing chapter assists in scheduling an initial meeting for those interested in operating as a Branch chapter. At the meeting, representatives will explain what USA Dance is, why having a new chapter would be beneficial, and how they could develop a new chapter by beginning as a Branch of the existing group.

- The Parent chapter should be involved in all plans made by the Branch. Branch chapters may not commit the Parent chapter in any way without prior approval by the chapter's board, i.e. rental agreements, hiring teachers etc. Every effort should be made to assure dance events planned by the Branch generate revenues sufficient to cover costs incurred.

Although, the goal is to eventually have a separate chapter, in the developmental phase, there needs to be a close working relationship and free flow of information between the Branch and Parent groups and USA Dance Central Office.

Either the Parent or Branch chapter should request the information packet titled "How to Form a USA Dance Chapter" from the Central Office at 800-447-9047. While the branch is not yet going to operate independently, the packet contains information that will be helpful in promoting events and growing membership.

Membership

There should be a base of at least 6-10 members who want to work on development of the Branch Chapter. More is better, but a small core group that functions as the Branch Chapter Committee under the existing Parent chapter board can start a Branch Chapter. One of the immediate goals of the Branch Chapter will be to generate at least 25 new members, at which time the Branch Chapter may split off into an independent chapter by holding elections and requesting certification in accordance with national guidelines. Until that time, all new members joining are affiliated with the parent chapter,

Branch Committee Formation

The initial Branch Committee is made up of volunteers who are USA Dance members interested in eventual development of a new chapter and approved by the Parent Chapters Board of Directors. At least one of the Branch Committee members must also serve on the Board of the Parent Chapter. As the Branch group grows, the Branch Committee can expand as required. The Branch Committee selects its own Chair who serves as the liaison between the Branch and Parent chapter. It is expected that the Committee chair or designated representative will attend board meetings of the Parent chapter to provide regular status reports.

Branch Committee Operation

The Branch Chapter Committee submits plans for scheduled dances in the target community to the Parent chapter for review and approval.

The Branch Committee should meet on a regular basis. Weekly is recommended initially as the committee maps out a course of action for setting goals, developing membership, scheduling events, etc. They can phase into monthly meetings once the organizational framework is in place.

It is important to understand the Branch Chapter operates as part of the Parent chapter and National USA Dance. In order for our non-profit 501(3)(c) status and liability insurance to apply to events the Branch schedules they must comply with the following requirements.

1. All accounting--income and expense--must go through the Parent chapter's checking account. Only a Certified Chapter is authorized to open a USA Dance checking account. The branch chapter may not open a separate bank account.
2. End of year financial reporting by the Parent chapter to the National organization must include receipts and expenses of the Branch group. This end of year reporting serves as our basis for returns filed with the IRS.
3. In order to be included under our liability insurance, all events scheduled by the Branch Chapter must be approved by the Parent Chapter. In addition, a representative of the Parent chapter must attend all dances or events sponsored by the branch in order to minimize liability risk. This may be the Branch Committee member who serves on the board of the Parent chapter, or another person as designated and approved by both the Branch and Parent chapter.
4. All events must be advertised as being sponsored by USA Dance and also show the Parent Chapter name, i.e."Sponsored by USA Dance - Baltimore MD Chapter # 6999." Or, to highlight the Branch target area, include a local designation-- "Sponsored by the Towson Branch Chapter Committee of USA Dance - Baltimore MD Chapter # 6999"

Responsibilities of Branch Committee Members

The Chair serves as leader of the Committee and schedules regular meetings to facilitate communications and planning.

At the initial Committee meeting, determine who will handle the following items:

1. Communications with Parent Chapter and National USA Dance - this is usually handled by either the Committee Chair or the Committee member who serves on the Board of the Parent Chapter.
2. Record branch minutes and maintain meeting records
3. Communications with the public, i.e. handling inquiries about chapter events
4. Distribution of promotional press releases to media and flyers about events
5. Maintain a list of members who have joined in the target area - while they will be affiliated with the Parent Chapter, the Branch will want to track those who are joining in support of the new group and attending their events.
6. Maintain income and expense records with receipts and expenses provided to Parent Chapter Board on at least a monthly basis.

Reporting Requirements

As the Branch Chapter evolves, it will be necessary to keep the Parent chapter apprised of progress. A group can function as a Branch for up to two years but the ultimate goal is to develop sufficient membership and community interest to be able to support a new

chapter. It is also important to provide regular status reports to the Regional Vice President, Area Coordinator (if one is assigned) and the Central Office. These officers can provide assistance as questions arise and want to work with you to achieve your goals. This status update can be in the form of an email, written report or phone call. Information provided should include the number of dances held/planned, attendance, number of new members in the Branch Chapter area, etc.

Becoming a Chapter

Once the Branch group has at least 25 members it may initiate the process to become an independent chapter.

1. Contact the Parent Chapter and Regional Vice President to let them know the good news - There is new, independent Chapter!
2. Contact Central office at 800-447-9047 for current guidelines on scheduling elections, requesting certification as a chapter and opening a USA Dance bank account.
3. At that time, USA Dance will assign a chapter number to your group.
4. Once that is assigned, it will be necessary to determine which members want to be affiliated with the new chapter.
5. Each member should notify the National Membership Director of their desire to belong to the new group via email at membership-dir@UsaDance.org or, if they have no access to email, call Central Office at 800-447-9047.
6. When the list of members affiliating under the developing chapter is put together, nominations for elections can begin.

Note: adjustment will be made to the Parent Chapter's membership figures so they are not penalized for the decline in membership caused by those transferring to the new chapter when calculating annual net increase in memberships under the current rebate program.

Once elections have been held, the original Branch Chapter Committee is dissolved. The newly elected board will develop an operating plan, establish a bank account and submit a Request for Certification per guidelines provided to become a new chapter.