



Your Guide to Launching and Running a Successful Keep Massachusetts Beautiful Chapter

Congratulations on taking the first step toward organizing a local Keep Massachusetts Beautiful chapter! From my experience as the founder of Keep Mansfield Beautiful in 2008 and Keep Massachusetts Beautiful in 2014, I can tell you that organizing volunteers to clean up and green up communities across our beautiful state has been one of the most personally rewarding experiences of my life. Seeing your ideas put into action and observing the tangible improvements as you travel through your community is truly inspiring!

At Keep Massachusetts Beautiful, part of our mission is to teach environmental and community improvement champions like you how to get started and succeed over the long term. This guide includes tips and guidance to help you hit the ground running and achieve long-term success.

Please keep in mind that no two KMB chapters are exactly alike. Each chapter leader has different levels of ambition and each community has its own unique challenges to tackle. As you consider getting started on your journey with Keep Massachusetts Beautiful, remember that our system is highly flexible. The only requirement we have of our local chapters is that they "take action to make their communities cleaner, greener places to live, work, and play."

Founder & Executive Director
Keep Massachusetts Beautiful



KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE

BENEFITS & SUPPORT PROVIDED TO KMB CHAPTERS

- A logo for your local chapter and assistance setting up your social media accounts
- Liability insurance coverage for community cleanup events
- Guidance on how to create and execute fundraising campaigns, including online donations through the KMB website
- Access to the KMB website, e-newsletter, event management, and fundraising platform
- Logistical and planning support for local Great Massachusetts Cleanup events
- Public relations support
- Fiscal sponsorship services for potential new nonprofits
- Eligibility for annual \$500 Plant Something Bee-eautiful grant, as well as a \$2,500 annual high school Next-Gen Environmental Leader Scholarship
- Ongoing coaching and support from the KMB executive director

GETTING STARTED

Step 1 FORM A CORE TEAM

While many of our chapter leaders are self-motivated (otherwise, they wouldn't even be considering starting a local chapter), managing a local KMB chapter on your own can be challenging. We have found that our most successful chapters are operated by a core steering committee of 3 to 9 people. This spreads out the work among more people and ensures the chapter will continue even if its founder moves on or away.



To get started, find at least two other people who can serve as members of your “launch committee.” As you grow, you may want to expand this core committee to 5, 7, or even 9 members. More hands make light work! As you consider potential committee members to recruit, look for people with skills in the areas of communications, social media, fundraising, marketing, finance, and event management. Look for people who are “doers” and not just “thinkers.” And of course, look for people who share your passion for a cleaner, greener community and will be easy to work with.

Step 2 GATHER THE FACTS

While you may be eager to get started on community improvement projects, experience shows that it's best to pause and do some local research first. You want to avoid invading an existing organization's turf or stepping on any toes. Take the time to get the “lay of the land” in your community before initiating any projects. Here are some people and groups you may want to contact to see if they are already working on projects related to litter prevention and cleanup, waste reduction and recycling, beautification, and environmental education:

- Your city's mayor and city council members
- Your town manager or select board members
- The head of your community's department of public works
- The head of your community's parks and recreation department
- Your community's conservation agent
- The local recycling committee (if one exists)
- The local sustainability committee (if one exists)
- The local garden club (if one exists)
- Local civic groups (Elks Club, Masons, Rotary, etc.)
- Other local nonprofits that focus on environmental issues

Be sure to be respectful in your communications with other organizations or municipal department leaders. You may need help from many of these people in the future, so you'll want to develop a positive, long-term relationship! At a minimum, you should seek to get buy-in for the idea of launching a local KMB chapter from your town's Select Board, or if you live in a city, the mayor and city council.

Log everything you learn into a shared spreadsheet that everyone on your core team can access. We also strongly recommend that you conduct an annual "Litter Index." Step one in this process is to identify a representative sample of main streets and back roads in your community. Next, gather a team of scorers who will rate the level of litter observed within each scoring area. The best time to do this is in early spring, after any remaining snow has melted. You then compile everyone's scores to reach a composite score and track the results from year to year. This data also helps your chapter prioritize the areas most in need of litter cleanup. Contact us for more details if you have questions about creating a Litter Index.

Step 3 CHOOSE AN ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

Generally, there are three ways to organize a local KMB chapter:

OPTION 1: Form a Community or Volunteer Group. This is the simplest way to get started. Chapters operating under this model are simply operating as a group of concerned citizens.

- **PROS:** Easy to set up and no reporting or open meeting laws to follow
- **CONS:** The group may fizzle out if one or two key people leave; financial contributions to your organization are not tax-deductible to potential donors.

OPTION 2: Form a Committee of your Town or City. Under this option, your group would operate as an official committee of your municipal government. This requires you to approach your Select Board or City Council and make the case for establishing a new committee.

- **PROS:** Chapters within this model have more credibility and staying power as an official municipal committee. It is more likely that your chapter will be in existence for many years to come, as your municipality will seek to fill any vacancies on the committee when they arise. Any funds you raise will be held in a special account by the municipality.
- **CONS:** The chapter is subject to Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, which requires that all meeting agendas be posted 48 hours in advance, meeting minutes be published, and committee members cannot deliberate as a group outside of public meetings. Your Select Board or City Council decides who gets approved to serve on the chapter committee.



OPTION 3: Launch a 501c3 Nonprofit. Organizing an official nonprofit today is much easier if you use the IRS' EZ Application. Organizing as a 501c3 nonprofit does confer an added degree of credibility, but you should only consider this option if you are fully committed, as there is a \$275 application fee. You also need to incorporate within the state of Massachusetts (\$35 fee).

- **PROS:** People and businesses may be able to deduct donations to your chapter from their taxable income; your chapter is exempt from state sales tax.
- **CONS:** \$400 application fee and annual reporting requirement to the IRS. You also need to file an application to raise funds with the state of Massachusetts and file a brief annual report.

ADDITIONAL OPTION: Apply for Fiscal Sponsorship. Keep Massachusetts Beautiful can serve as your fiscal sponsor. This means that your financial supporters can make a tax-deductible donation to Keep Massachusetts Beautiful and we will hold these funds for you in our bank account. When you have expenses that you need to pay, you submit a receipt and an explanatory note, and KMB will mail you a check or pay the expense for you (whichever you prefer). This requires that you sign our fiscal sponsorship agreement. Please note: we assess a 7.5% annual administration fee for this service. On July 1 of each year, we will deduct 7.5% of all funds deposited on your chapter's behalf during the previous fiscal year (July 1 through June 30).

Step 4

DEVELOP A MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TO "GROW YOUR CIRCLE"

As a new chapter, you will need to build a circle of local volunteers, supporters, and donors. Therefore, the ability to communicate frequently and effectively is critical to your success. If you do not possess strong writing or social media skills, consider recruiting people who have these skills. Here are three areas where we recommend you focus:

1. Build a Social Media Following

One of the first and easiest ways to build a loyal following is via a Facebook page. Keep Massachusetts Beautiful will provide you with a chapter logo and a Facebook page and appoint you as a co-administrator of the page. We also recommend you start a Facebook group. The main difference between "pages" and "groups" is that anyone can post within a group, whereas pages are more about sharing information with followers.

Once your page and/or group has been created, start inviting local friends and municipal leaders to follow your page or join your group. Start posting about your new chapter, what you want to accomplish, and how people can get involved. Keep things upbeat and focus on the positive changes you'd like to make. You should also consider establishing an Instagram account and, if you want to attract a younger audience, a TikTok account. KMB can assist you with these tasks too.



KMB also maintains a private KMB Chapter Leaders Facebook group that allows members to ask questions of and network with other KMB chapter leaders.

Launch a Website

A well-designed website is critical to your chapter's long-term success. As a first step, KMB will create a one-page site that resides on the KMB website and provides an overview of your chapter. See the Keep Walpole Beautiful page as an example: <https://keepmassbeautiful.org/who-we-are/keep-walpole-beautiful.html>

Once you're well-established, consider creating your own stand-alone website. For good examples of inexpensive but functional chapter websites, visit www.keepmansfieldbeautiful.com or www.keepphbeautiful.org.

2. Create a Quarterly or Monthly E-newsletter

A quarterly or monthly e-newsletter is a great way to stay in touch with your volunteers, raise funds, and educate your circle of supporters. KMB offers access to a state-of-the-art e-newsletter platform and event management system. We recommend that chapters use the KMB platform in order to promote brand consistency.

Step 5

DEVELOP A FINANCIAL PLAN

Most KMB chapters will eventually incur some expenses. For example, you may incur expenses for volunteer supplies or website hosting fees. To ensure that you can manage any funds you raise, apply for a federal tax ID number and open a bank account in the name of your chapter. To get a Tax ID from the IRS:

Visit <https://sa.www4.irs.gov/modiein/individual/index.jsp>.

- Click on "Begin the Application."
- Scroll down to the bottom and choose "View Additional Types, Including Tax-Exempt and Governmental Organizations."
- Select Community or Volunteer group and provide the requested information.
- Once you receive your Tax ID number, open up a bank account named Keep (your town or city) Beautiful.



Next, think about how you can start raising funds. For example, you might host a Facebook fundraiser or solicit donations from local businesses. Your local town or city government may also be able to cover some expenses. KMB provides free coaching to help chapters develop a fundraising strategy, so please reach out to us when you're ready to focus on fundraising.

KMB Annual Chapter Dues

As a 501c3 nonprofit, Keep Massachusetts Beautiful is working to develop a diverse stream of ongoing revenue sources. Therefore, KMB asks local chapters to pay annual dues. However, chapters are not *required* to pay annual dues. KMB operates on an honor system—once a local chapter is well established with some funds in the bank, KMB requests they pay annual dues according to the following scale:

- Population of 10,000 or less: \$200
- Population of 10,001-30,000: \$300
- Population of 30,000-99,999: \$500
- Population of 100,000+: \$1,000

These dues help pay for all of the support services KMB provides to its chapters.

NEXT STEPS

If you have not already had an introductory phone call with KMB executive director Neil Rhein, email neil@keepmassbeautiful.org or call 508-320-8621 to schedule a call and gain access to the KMB Chapter Leader online portal. If you have already had your introductory conversation and you're ready to move ahead, contact Neil Rhein again to take the first steps toward launching your chapter or anytime you have a question.

We wish you great success and look forward to seeing what kinds of improvements you will achieve in your community!

How Your Community Benefits From Establishing a Local KMB Chapter



- 1 A cleaner, greener environment
- 2 A more attractive place to run a business and shop
- 3 Enhanced community pride
- 4 Litter cleanups often inspire additional improvements
- 5 Little or no cost to taxpayers

