

NEXTGEN

GETTING STARTED
WITH NEXTGEN





WHO IS NEXTGEN





Our union's Next Generation program introduces new and young workers to the diverse world of activism, both internally within their locals and externally in their communities. NextGen is designed to empower our members by providing space for collaboration, visibility, and education.

NEXTGEN IS ONE OF SEVEN MANDATED COMMITTEES

At the 2025 USW Constitutional Convention, delegates voted to amend our union's constitution to ensure each local union maintains a NextGen committee to educate and develop the union's future leaders and activists.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF NEXTGEN?

BUILDING OUR BENCH OF LEADERS AND ACTIVISTS

NextGen educates new and young members about the past and present of the labor movement. It teaches them about the basic structure of our union, at the local, district, and international levels, and provides opportunities for them to get involved in some of the most important work we do as members, from collective bargaining to handling grievances, and beyond.

PROVIDING TRAINING AND MENTORSHIP

Next Gen provides members with the knowledge and skills they need to become more active in our union, relying on the mentorship of seasoned union members and retirees. Finding committed senior members to help aid in this process often provides a crucial support structure in building out a successful NextGen Committee.

TRANSFORMING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH ACTIVISM AND SERVICE

NextGen members help advance the wider fight for union rights and social justice by strengthening bonds with community groups and other allies, engaging in collective action to further our values. We also give back to our communities through fundraisers, acts of service, and charity.



STARTING A NEXTGEN COMMITTEE



THE FUTURE OF OUR UNION DEPENDS ON OUR ABILITY TO IDENTIFY THE NEXT GENERATION OF UNION ACTIVISTS WHO WILL HELP FILL THE GAP WHILE SEASONED ACTIVISTS MOVE ON.

NEXTGEN MEMBERS CONTRIBUTE UNIQUE INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES TO BOLSTER THE USW'S EXISTING PROGRAMS AND ARE CRITICAL IN BUILDING A STRONGER LABOR MOVEMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

WHETHER YOU ARE BRAND-NEW TO THE UNION OR YOU'VE BEEN AROUND FOR A FEW YEARS, IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO GET INVOLVED.



HOW CAN I GET PLUGGED IN WITH NEXTGEN?

If your local already has a NextGen committee, tell them you'd like to get involved. If you aren't sure whether your local has a committee, check with your local leadership.

1. Go to a local union meeting – Find out where and when your local meets, and bring a few friends with you.
2. Meet your union siblings –Being part of the USW is like gaining another family. Reach out to your fellow members to find ways that you can get dialed in to this vital network.
3. Get educated – The union has fought for workplace rights and benefits for you and your coworkers for generations. Now, it's vital to get a copy of your contract, read it, and pass it on.
4. Sign a card – If you haven't yet signed a USW membership card, please do. If you have, encourage others to sign one. This is also one way to get active with your local organizing committee.
5. Have fun with your coworkers – Get involved with your local NextGen committee. If you don't have one, you can start one.

WHAT IF MY LOCAL DOESN'T HAVE A NEXTGEN COMMITTEE?

- Talk to other new and young union members to see if they are interested in participating. (It's okay to start small. Remember, you only need two people to form a committee!)
- Keep track of union members who want to get involved, and include them in the planning process.
- Schedule your first meeting. Try to choose times convenient for the majority of members in your local. Use the meeting to explain the NextGen program and ask for feedback and input. Use a sign-in sheet to gather attendees' names and contact information.
- Make your presence known. Ask your local union president to have NextGen added as an agenda item during union meetings and to include NextGen events in local communications.
- Don't be afraid to ask more seasoned members for their support. Meet with members involved in other committees, such as Civil and Human Rights or Rapid Response. Ask them for advice and if they'd be willing to mentor your NextGen committee.
- Identify your goals. Gather input from fellow members to identify small and large goals for your committee to work towards. Talk to your executive board about your ideas and ask for feedback.
- Plan your first committee action. Engage local union members with an activity, training, fundraiser, or community event to introduce NextGen and build momentum.



BEST PRACTICES RECRUITM

WHO CAN I RECRUIT?

- FELLOW USW MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ARE YOUNG AND/OR NEW TO THE UNION OR LOCAL UNION LEADERSHIP
- COWORKERS WITH WHOM YOU'VE BUILT A PERSONAL CONNECTION OR FRIENDSHIP
- OTHER LIKE-MINDED COWORKERS WHO SHARE AN INTEREST IN THE UNION OR A PASSION FOR ACTIVISM.
- NEW HIRES

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HOW DO I RECRUIT?

Introduce yourself and start a conversation. Explain what NextGen is and why developing the next generation of union leaders and activists is essential.

Be consistent in getting the word out to your coworkers and regularly following up with them.

Ask your coworkers for ideas or things they want to see NextGen accomplish.

Share the good work your committee is already doing.

TIPS FOR REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION:

1. Make a practice of reaching out regularly to new and young members. Use these conversations to introduce yourself and the union. Educate your coworkers about the basics of our union and the benefits of union membership – don't assume everyone knows this!
2. Rethink the traditional local union meeting. Split or extended shifts and overtime can make getting members together for a meeting challenging. Try new ways of gathering that are fun, and whenever possible, include members' families. We've had success with picnics, happy hours at local restaurants, and more. Ask the younger members of your local what might make a meeting more appealing to them, and use some of their ideas.
3. Use social media. We must meet our members where they are, and overwhelmingly, that's on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, X, and more. Our USW Communications Department can offer training for members leading this charge for their locals, so don't be afraid to reach out!
4. Tailor your message and materials. Some members like to receive a handout at work, while others prefer to get their information over email, text message, or social media. Use all of the communication tactics at your disposal to cast the widest net possible. Remember, our union's Communications Department can help!





WHAT CAN
I EXPECT
→ AT A
NEXTGEN
MEETING?

NextGen committees gather in warm and welcoming spaces both in and outside the workplace to do the critical work of building the union. You can expect to enter a space with your peers where vital information is shared and open discussions are encouraged. Members might discuss business from a previous meeting, brainstorm upcoming events, share ideas for future NextGen initiatives or ways to help local union leaders. Every meeting will be a little different, but will always be centered around building our bench and growing the union.

TIPS FOR RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING:

- Ensure you have a clear purpose for all scheduled meetings.
- Make sure local union leaders are aware of the meetings and invite them to participate.
- Create an agenda for every meeting that is prepared in advance and approved by other members of your committee.
- Circulate the agenda and print extra copies for members at the door.
- Make space for introductions and icebreakers to welcome new members.
- Stick to the printed agenda so the meeting stays on topic and time is well spent.
- Open meetings for discussion, questions, and idea-sharing to hear various perspectives and encourage participation.

SAMPLE NEXTGEN MEETING AGENDA

Date:

Time:

Location:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Review minutes from the previous meeting
3. Review agenda
4. Old business
5. Committee reports given by committee chairs
6. New business
7. Other items
8. Announce next meeting: date, time, and location
9. Adjourn/social time for members



NEXT



NEXT

TRANS



TRANSFORMING OUR COMMUNITIES

THROUGH ACTIVISM AND SERVICE



LOCAL 6571 NEXTGEN COMMITTEE SPARKS SOLIDARITY WHILE CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP

Logistics worker Devin Worsley lit the path forward for USW Local 6571's roughly 420 members at Gerdau in Whitby, Ont., when he launched a NextGen committee to connect newer members, build skills, and spark leadership.

A five-year Steelworker and union steward, Worsley was primarily focused on mentorship. Through his NextGen committee, he paired experienced activists with emerging leaders to foster knowledge sharing, boost confidence, and prepare members for future leadership roles.

Worsley also dedicated the committee to one-on-one outreach, team-based planning, and joint events with other local union committees. "I didn't want to control it- it's teamwork," Worsley said.

What keeps him energized is the heart of stewarding: standing up for coworkers. "You learn, take pride in your work, and come together in support of solidarity."

Worsley encourages new members to jump in, not be afraid to ask questions, and learn the union's story – because today's protections exist thanks to those who built them.

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'A LABOR OF LOVE': LOCAL 8888 BRINGS COMFORT TO HOMELESS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Local 8888 NextGen coordinator, Ashley Seabrook, was in search of volunteer opportunities for her committee when she noticed that a local church was looking for volunteers to make mats for the unhoused in her community.

Each comprised of roughly 500 plastic grocery bags, the mats provide a small measure of comfort and insulation to community members experiencing homelessness.

Seabrook sent four of her committee members to the church to learn how to construct the mats. After a generous community member named Barry helped the local construct weaving looms free of charge, the committee was ready to get to work.

"The next hurdle for us was collecting thousands of plastic grocery bags," remembered Seabrook.

NextGen member Celeste Armstrong began calling local grocery stores, hoping to gain access to the bags customers use for recycling. She also took to local community pages on Facebook, asking people to donate their clean, unused bags.

"What happened next was incredible," Seabrook said. "Celeste's home, her car, and even the union hall were soon inundated with bags. Thousands poured in from people eager to contribute to something meaningful."

Now, thanks to the community's generosity and a little grassroots hustle, Local 8888 is finally ready to begin the weaving process.

"This project is a true labor of love — and we're only just getting started," Seabrook says.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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SHARE YOUR IDEAS! LET US KNOW WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T! SEND YOUR FEEDBACK AND IDEAS TO NEXTGEN@USW.ORG

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