



FLYING CLUBS
POWERED BY AOPA

Network Flying Clubs: Standards, Values and Best Practices

Standards for Network Flying Clubs

The Flying Club Network is a benefit for interested general aviation flying clubs, and AOPA does not accept responsibility for structure, liability, governance, or operation of any Network club.

A club wanting to join AOPA's Flying Club Network should—in addition to complying with applicable FAA, state, and local airport rules, regulations and compliance standards—meet the following fundamental requirements:

- Be a non-profit or not for profit organization
- The club has at least 3 members
- The club has at least one aircraft, owned or leased
- There shall be a point of contact, including name, phone number and email address
- The club uses a method of scheduling the aircraft, that is equally accessible to all members
- The club shall aspire to adopt the following AOPA Flying Club Network Values and the associated Best Practices, as a means of observing the values.

In addition, we recommend that clubs consider the following for reasons of good governance and operations:

- Establish the club is a legal entity, preferably a non-profit Corporation
- Establish and maintain bylaws and operating rules, approved by the club
- Hold regular club safety meetings
- Create a three-year rolling budget
- Have the appropriate Board of Directors and/or Officers in place
- Maintain an insurance policy for aircraft and other equipment and covering the club against liability claims
- File an operational agreement and/or hangar lease agreement with the airport operator
- Keep an active social calendar

Flying Club Network Values and Best Practices

Equality

According to the FAA, Club Members should be equal owners in the assets and liabilities of the club, either through shared ownership or through the shared obligation of leases that provide exclusive access for club members, only. Aircraft should be easily and equally accessible to members, with all members having the same opportunity to enjoy the club's benefits.

Best Practices

- If an aircraft is leased to a flying club, a lease agreement should be crafted between the aircraft owner and the club. The resulting agreement should be written down to ensure a mutual understanding between both parties, and to ensure that specifics of the agreement can be referenced in the future should any points of contention arise.
- If an aircraft is leased to a flying club, the lease should be exclusive to the club and have a term of at least one year. This will allow the club to enjoy owner-like privileges of the aircraft.
- While the specifics of a lease should be negotiated and agreed with the aircraft owner, it is good practice to set the lease amount to provide a fair return, to the owner, for the club's exclusive use of the aircraft.

Accountability

Flying clubs in AOPA's Flying Club Network should strive to achieve the highest standards of structure, operation and governance, and should be run with diligence and professionalism. The financial decisions of the club should reflect the best interests of all members and should always be made with an eye towards ensuring adequate aircraft availability and fair, reasonable rates. Governance should be open, democratic and transparent, and operational information should be made available to each member.

Best Practices

- A flying club should have a board of directors and/or officers that take responsibility for the management of different aspects of the club. It is a good practice to define these roles in writing (e.g. club president, treasurer) as this removes ambiguity about where particular responsibilities lie.
- In order for club directors and/or officers to govern with diligence and professionalism, they must be knowledgeable about their roles. For this reason, it is important for clubs to select the right people to do the right jobs. If a club lacks members with knowledge in a certain area (e.g. accounting), it is recommended that it provide access to whatever training is necessary for a member to succeed in that role.

- It is a best practice for clubs to plan in a strategic manner, and to continually improve their processes. This can best be achieved by holding dedicated strategic planning sessions at regular intervals (e.g. annually). You are not alone in this – call the AOPA Flying Cubs team for help and suggestions.
- As part of the strategic planning process, clubs should prepare and maintain future-looking budgets. This will help to ensure that they are financially viable over time. It is a best practice for clubs to include a reserve within this budget, as doing so helps to insure the club against unforeseen financial burdens (for example, maintenance expenses).

Cooperation

Clubs should foster a cooperative atmosphere for all club decisions, seeking and addressing the input of all club members. Clubs should also provide opportunities for mentorship, where more experienced aviators offer encouragement and education to less experienced members.

Best Practices

- Over time, all members of the flying club should share in its responsibilities. Regular elections, which allow for the transfer of these responsibilities, should be held. This will give everyone an opportunity to play an active role in the success of the club.
- It is a best practice for clubs to encourage mentorship through the pairing of newer members with those who are more experienced in club matters. Similarly, inexperienced pilots should be paired with more experienced pilots in the pursuit of common operational practices and safety.
- A club should work to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement—a culture in which members feel a willingness to both give and receive constructive criticism to become better, safer aviators.

Safety

Safety should be a paramount priority for any club participating in AOPA's Flying Clubs Network. We recommend holding regular safety meetings, during which members can discuss any relevant safety matters pertaining to the club's current operations. Clubs should also have a designated Safety Officer whose role is to promote a safety culture within the club and to ensure that club operations are performed in adherence to strong safety standards.

Best Practices

- It is considered a best practice for clubs to implement a formal safety program, and to hold regular safety meetings (or add a safety component to membership meetings). It is recommended that clubs create the position of a Safety Officer to head this effort.
- Standardized procedures should be developed and made available to club members to ensure that an operational consistency is maintained.
- Mandatory club stand-downs should be held to focus member attention on relevant safety issues.

- Open reporting of mishaps and/or lessons learned should be encouraged by the club, and such instances should be thoroughly discussed and viewed as educational opportunities that benefit all members.

Camaraderie

Camaraderie between members is important in all flying clubs, as the more time that members spend together, the more cohesive the club is likely to be. Camaraderie takes place as members grow in friendship and become more trusting of each other, and it can be fostered through group social interaction. For this reason, it is suggested that clubs in AOPA's Flying Clubs Network hold regular social events. In addition to being fun, such activities are likely to make for a more closely-knit group.

Best Practices

- To encourage interaction among members and to maximize the sense of camaraderie that can be enjoyed within a club setting, it is recommended that clubs designate a Social Officer to organize social events (e.g. barbeques, fly-outs, etc.) on a regular basis.
- Flying clubs should work to encourage a culture devoid of ego—a culture in which pilot experience, both good and bad, can be viewed as learning opportunities.

Community

All clubs in AOPA's Flying Club Network should strive to be a good neighbor both to other organizations at the airport and to the broader community. Clubs should work to cultivate strong relationships with flight schools, FBOs, and airport authorities, and never offer, or advertise, any type of service that might present unfair competition to commercial operators. Social events represent a good way to bring members, friends of the club, families, and interested prospective members together. Through outreach and conduct, AOPA Network Clubs should work to cultivate an atmosphere of community and general aviation awareness.

Best Practices

- Clubs are in a unique position to serve as ambassadors for general aviation, and it is good practice to take advantage of this opportunity by reaching out to the community and involving it in the wonder of flying. This can be achieved by hosting events open to the public at the airport, or by creating educational experiences for community groups such as Boy Scouts, 4H clubs, etc. Remember to fully involve your Airport Operator with all such events.
- It is recommended that clubs actively work to forge strong relationships with all airport stakeholders, including airport management, other tenants and commercial operators. This can be accomplished through open communications, and by inviting other parties at the airport to club events.

- In the spirit of fairness as well as lawfulness, clubs should adhere to FAA rules prohibiting “holding out,” or advertising services, particularly flight training services, to the public. Because clubs are not required to meet the minimum standards imposed on commercial operations, it places flight schools and FBOs at an unfair disadvantage when flying clubs (nonprofit or not-for-profit operations) begin to compete for their customers.
- While it is acceptable for flying club members to receive training in a club aircraft (in the same way they could in their own), it is a best practice for clubs to neither *provide* flight instruction nor facilitate financial transactions between instructors and club members. Instead, these transactions should be between the member receiving training and the flight instructor that the member has chosen, and so should not go through the club’s financial system.

Participation

Being a member of the AOPA Flying Clubs Network is not intended to be a passive experience. By joining, you are indicating a willingness to help AOPA work toward its goals of making flying more accessible and affordable to the GA community. As a Network member, you will receive educational and other material from AOPA intended for the benefit of flying club members, and we would greatly appreciate you disseminating this material to all club members. Members of the Network will be expected to provide feedback on occasion, which AOPA will use to better understand the operational status and health of the overall Network.

Best Practices

- Clubs should review their information in the Flying Club Finder at least annually, to ensure that it remains current. Ensure that at least one club member is responsible to act as the administrator for the club page.
- There is an expectation that Network Clubs will complete an annual Flying Clubs Survey sent out by the Flying Clubs team to better understand how both it, and AOPA as a whole, can better serve the needs of flying clubs.
- We consider it a best practice for Network Clubs to be willing to mentor local clubs-in-formation at AOPA’s request, helping others to experience the fun and camaraderie that flying club membership promotes.