

Why reunite?

AFS returnees have the potential to become a national, if not a global resource for promoting agendas of cross-cultural understanding - ultimately by participating in a global network to promote world peace. Many returnees have reached a position in life and society, from where they can promote such ideas. A strong national as well as a global AFS returnee or alumni network/association is therefore an asset to AFS as a whole. The ideas presented below are examples from our experiences of building Cercle des Amis AFS, France and AFS Alumni DK. They are intended as an inspiration to create vital AFS alumni organisations, though they may not be applicable to all.

Some returnees, who are not involved in the daily AFS volunteer work, still wish to keep in contact with and work for the organisation and the values it represents. Ideally, any returnee should see herself as an AFS alumnus from the day of return. Likewise, families who have hosted exchange students may wish to stay connected to the organisation. Other potential members might be returnees, who have been less active in the daily AFS volunteer work, but still wish to keep in contact with the organisation and the values it represents. Such alumni members are a potential resource for the national committees or local chapters, and may assist with fundraising i.e. scholarships for young people, who otherwise have no opportunity to participate in an exchange programme. But even more importantly, such organisations may ensure that the global understanding and values developed in individuals and families through the intercultural exchange experience are channelled into actions, which benefit both the local as well as the global community in the long term. AFS alumni networks are thereby an opportunity we cannot afford to ignore.

Why become a member of an AFS Alumni association? (What is in it for me?)

AFS alumni organisations should be open to everybody who supports the AFS idea: returnees, host families, and others, who as members - regardless of age - could have fun, meet new people, and reunite with old friends - for mutual inspiration, enrichment and empowerment.

In addition, you may at:

- Ages 17-30 Use the AFS experience and the AFS alumni network as a stepping-stone for more personal growth, the shaping of a future career, etc.
- Ages 31-40 Use older Alumni members as mentors regarding your search for a job or your job performance
- Ages 40+ Use your AFS experience in your professional network as well as being an active alumnus and provide support and inspiration to others.

How to establish a national AFS Alumni organisation?

Step one: How to find interested AFS Returnees in my country?

- Form a small group that collects names and establishes contacts to potential members via
 - AFS rosters, national and international lists of participants.
 - National AFS office
 - Public databases

- Newspapers
- Social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. as well as websites
- By word of mouth
- Organise data for example in a spreadsheet or something similar to which a few people have access.

Step two: How to approach the work?

- Call for a first general meeting with interested returnees and other potential members and clarify the purpose of setting up an AFS alumni organisation
- Clarify the purpose and roles with the national AFS organisation
- Form a small group whose job it is to draft by-laws including
 - Aims and objectives of the organisation
 - Agenda for the annual assembly
 - The formal connection with the national AFS organisation (e.g. the chairperson of the latter could be an ex-officio member of the AFS alumni board – and vice versa)
 - Suggestions for possible dual membership of both the national AFS and the AFS Alumni organisations
 - Create a website with (as a minimum) the basic information about your organisation. We suggest the name of AFSalumni [plus Internet country abbreviations, e.g. AFSalumni.dk] as it would be easier to identify globally!
 - Create an easily identifiable logo (to be agreed upon with AFS) - preferably using the AFS standard for alumni organisations
 - Consider to be visible on Facebook or similar social media (may vary from country to country)
 - Decide on different categories of memberships (single, family, company or dual membership), as well as suggestions for membership fee/no membership fee
 - Prepare a tentative budget for recurring costs.

When established – make sure to:

- Keep continuous track of members and potential members.
- Keep members informed of activities using email, Internet, Facebook or other social media
- Make social media a two-way communication with the members
- Appoint webmaster/moderator

Remember & Celebrate

What to do?

- Invite members to concerts, theatres, museums, meetings with thematic topics - perhaps with a returnee as keynote speaker – but always with time and space to socialise
- Arrange meetings on important societal issues

- Provide opportunities for networking, mentoring etc.
- Arrange annual reunions, returnee jubilees with e.g. 10 year intervals (i.e. in 2015 you would invite the years 1955, 1965, 1975, etc.)
- Share and identify documents, photos, etc. for setting up a national archive
 - Denmark has a national AFS archive organised by AFS Alumni DK
 - The AFS Foundation has established a Virtual Museum at <http://www.the-afs-archive.org>

Support

To members of the national **AFS alumni** organisation: see Remember and Celebrate

To the National **AFS** organisation

- Present to AFS the long-term perspective of the AFS experience
- Coordinate with the national AFS organisation about your ideas and plans
- Grant scholarships to future AFS exchange students (who in return send at least one travel report/letter back to members)
- Establish an honorary award (e.g. annually) to an outstanding AFS volunteer
- When asked (e.g. on legal or administrative matters) offer assistance
- Upon request collect names for the *Ambassadors List* in AFS International's annual report
- Handle requests for contacts to returnees for reunions, etc.
- Use members as a resource for visibility and marketing
- Become host parents or contact persons for exchange students
- Establish and maintain an archive (many early AFS returnees still have their yearbooks, letters, etc.)
- Establish network with other AFS alumni organisations in order to develop joint activities
- Present the AFS idea and impact on your own experience, when e.g. AFS local chapters inform the public about its programmes.

As these guidelines are based on experiences gained in AFS Alumni DK and Cercle des Amis, AFS France, respectively, we would be most grateful for your comments or suggestions for improvement of this document by mailing us on: HelpfulGuidelines@AFSalumni.dk

AFS'erly

The Boards of
AFS Alumni DK and Cercle des Amis, AFS France