

# **ABF Marketing Special Project Grants**

## **2019 Application Process**

### **Introduction**

The ABF have announced a national scheme of ABF Marketing Special Project Grants to assist clubs. There will be a number of conditions for successful applicants.

### **Strategy**

- ABF to support clubs to increase the number of beginners and returning players
- Clubs to increase the conversion rate of beginners into club members

### **Advertising Program**

- ABF to introduce a Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP)
- Utilise highly targeted Facebook advertising campaigns to attract new players
- Clubs and the ABF will share the advertising costs to a limit of \$500 for the ABF
- Clubs will conduct the Facebook advertising campaign in their local market
- ABF will assist and guide the clubs with marketing and technical support

### **Conversion Program for larger Clubs (smaller clubs given special consideration)**

- Provide more beginners intakes a year, preferably 3+ in large clubs
- Smaller classes to provide better learning experience
- One day and one night supervised session each week where possible
- Short lessons before all supervised sessions
- Rookie and flighted sessions in larger clubs
- Introduce "Buddy" program to support new players
- Provide availability of personal coaching/support at all times

### **Conditions for Clubs**

- Clubs to meet ABF Criteria to ensure appropriate expenditure and compliance
- Advertising must be for new members
- Clubs to contribute a minimum of 50% to the cost of the Facebook advertising
- Provide local photos and copy where possible
- Choose local post codes for target market
- Create landing page or forms for enquiries
- Follow up leads to landing page and report to ABF
- Entry and Exit Surveys for every beginners class to ABF
- Honour vouchers for free introductory lesson
- A date specific campaign with start and finish dates with lessons scheduled to start within three weeks of commencement of the advertising campaign
- All ads must include ABF logo
- Provide Facebook reports for each campaign with all analysis to ABF
- Provide Facebook reports with Amount Spent(AUD) to ABF

### **Applications**

- Applications to be made at
- <https://tinyurl.com/ABFApplications2019v1>
- If the link does not open then cut and paste it into your browser
- Closing Date will be 31 August 2019 but will be accepted and processed immediately
- Special consideration will be given to smaller regional clubs
- Contact the ABF with any questions [marketing@abf.com.au](mailto:marketing@abf.com.au)
- Or contact Peter Cox directly on 0413 676 326

## **Background**

- The average age of bridge players is over 70 years and life expectancy for men is 80 years and women 84 years in Australia leaving only about 10 years of continuing bridge club participation
- The attrition rate, or loss of members, is 3000 players each year in Australia who need to be replaced just to maintain current membership
- The retention rate of beginners through to becoming club members is about 25-30%
- The problems with static or declining affiliated bridge participation is similar in all countries and the problems well identified
- The benefits of a new registered player is an average of \$400 to an ABF bridge club and only \$22 per year to the ABF in capitation and masterpoint fees

## **Objectives**

- Provide incentive to clubs to increase number of beginners and members
- Replace the 10% of members lost to attrition each year and to grow for the future
- The ABF to conduct an advertising campaign with the clubs on Facebook to increase the exposure of bridge to its target market and to attract more people to learn to play bridge
- The ABF to introduce a Cooperating Advertising Campaign (CAP) to share the costs with the clubs
- Maximise the returns of marketing and teaching beginners to both ABF and Clubs
- Increase retention rate of beginners and returning players
- Provide feedback to the ABF on facebook results and number of beginners and new members
- Clubs to meet ABF Criteria to ensure appropriate expenditure and compliance
- Marketing to use feedback to refine facebook advertising and improve effectiveness of campaigns
- Clubs to understand that recruiting and training new players and converting them to being club members and ABF registered players is a sales function

This Cooperative Advertising Campaign includes discussions and consideration of aspects of the ACBL Cap Program in the US and the marketing strategies of the English Bridge Union.

Discussions have also been held with New Zealand on their scheme to grow membership by supporting clubs, particularly smaller clubs in regional areas.

# **ABF Marketing Special Project Grants – FAQs**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Why do we want to attract new players to Bridge?**

Many major competitive participants sport are in decline such as golf, tennis, cricket, netball, lawn bowls, rugby league and union.

#### **Is bridge under threat?**

The number of affiliated Bridge players in the US, the UK and New Zealand have all been declining and in Australia registered bridge players in 2016-17 also started to decline.

#### **What is causing the decline in numbers of bridge players?**

The average age of bridge players is over 70 years and with a life expectancy in Australia for men of 80 and women 84 the attrition rate is high and going to keep growing. The ABF loses about 10% of players or over 3,000 people each year and these need to be replaced just to maintain members.

#### **How does that effect my bridge club?**

About half of Australian bridge clubs have had a fall in membership in the last few years threatening their financial viability in the future and for some even their survival.

#### **What can we do about the threat to membership numbers?**

There are two major actions that we need to take; increase the number of beginners and returning players and increase the retention rate of these potential members or customers.

### **ADVERTISING**

#### **Can we just spend more money on advertising for new players?**

The use of main stream advertising including newspapers, radio and direct mail have been largely ineffective and expensive in the past.

#### **What about using social media?**

We are proposing using Facebook advertising which can be highly targeted to geographic areas such as post codes and to specific age and socio economic groups. However, there is no guarantee that this will be successful but hopefully will increase the reach and frequency of the bridge message in your area.

#### **What is the retention or conversion rate?**

In England and Australia the conversion of those beginners who start bridge lessons to playing club members a year later is about 25-35% on average. This means we need 10,000 new beginners each year, or 30% just to replace the 3,000 members we lost to attrition.

If we could improve this retention rate to 35-45% this would provide an extra 1,000 new members each year and provide a growth rate of 3%.

### **What does this mean for your club?**

This means you need to have an annual beginners intake of 30% of your club's membership. If you are an average size club 100 members you need 30 beginners. With a retention rate of a third that would provide 10 new members to replace those lost to attrition.

### **What is a member worth to a club?**

The average member plays about once a week, some far more and others much less, and with table money of say \$7 plus membership the player contributes about \$400 a year to your club. Some clubs charge far more and in Sydney table money of \$12-15 is common in the bigger clubs with members contributing \$1000 a year or more. Bridge is still the cheapest entertainment you can find and by keeping your club fees as high as reasonable provides funding for new technology and facilities to increase member satisfaction.

### **What is a player worth to the ABF?**

Each registered ABF player is worth about \$22 a year to the ABF which is split between capitation fees and masterpoint revenue. The players also play a State Capitation fee of about \$15. As you can see the club is the great winner from a growing membership.

## **FACEBOOK**

### **What is Facebook advertising?**

This is not the same as your bridge club's facebook page. It is advertising that will go on to middle Sponsored column or the right hand News feed column of facebook pages for people in the geographic market and the demographic profile you have chosen. It will include a photo and advertising copy for beginners lessons with a link to a 'landing Page' for your club where they can find further information and submit their name and email address. Even if they do not submit their personal information they may then go and research or visit your club.

### **What criteria do you set for the Facebook advertisement?**

I would suggest choosing post codes in your local geographic area and Facebook will tell you how many people live in those postcodes with the age and interests you select. We know from research that over 70% of bridge players claim location as their main reason for choosing a club.

### **What does the club have to do to create a Facebook ad?**

The ABF will provide some photos and copy but we are very happy for you to provide local content for your market. We suggest that someone good at using the internet learns how to create an ad and run a campaign. A link to a video made by Golf Victoria at <https://youtu.be/hryLf30XJOM> runs for about an hour that is very good. Otherwise google "Create a Facebook Ad" to get started. ABF Marketing will provide assistance on any problems you encounter and advice on geographic area, target age groups, words and pictures.

### **What content should you use?**

There are many guides but a good starting point is

1. Make it Visual – more important than words and ranks better with Facebook Algorithms. If using photos of people make them at the lower end of your target age group, pleasant looking and having fun. A very short video is even better.
2. Relevant – it is nearly impossible to get the perfect photo but make it relevant to bridge players.
3. A value proposition – everyone likes a bargain so free introductory drinks, free first lesson, a discount, free notes, savings on a bridge book will all help to attract prospective members.
4. Call to Action – absolutely essential “Call now and save x” or “Offer ends soon”, create sense of urgency.

### **What is a landing page?**

When an interested person hits the “Learn More” link it has to take them to a dedicated standalone web page or Landing Page where they will get more information about bridge and the course and be asked to provide their name, email address, mobile number and geographic location.

### **Who pays for the Facebook Ad?**

The club needs to open an account with Facebook which is quick and easy and then the club has to pay for the ad before Facebook will post it. Keep the page with the cost on it and forward it to the ABF who will reimburse you 50% of the cost up to a maximum of \$500. Remember the club can spend as much as they like on advertising but the ABF contribution is limited to \$500.

### **When do I run the ads?**

The ads must be run no more than three weeks before the start of the lessons so prospective members do not have to wait long to start learning bridge. The club is required to send reminder emails to all interested people both a week before the lesson starts and the day before.

## **CONVERSION PROGRAM**

### **Why is the conversion program so important?**

The conversion program is highly valuable to all clubs whether the club is an applicant for a grant or not. This is a way all clubs can increase their retention ratio, and hence membership, with little financial outlay but with effort from club management and members.

### **Why increase the number of intakes a year?**

Most major participant sports and leisure activities provide immediate training and coaching. Your local golf, tennis, football or bowling will provide immediate coaching and sometimes for free. Telling prospective bridge players they may have to wait up to six months for the next beginners is unacceptable in a highly competitive leisure market?

### **Can one learn without joining a class?**

The English Bridge Union on its first page of Learn Bridge suggests weekend courses, cruises, bridge learning software and bridge professionals for people who cannot make set class times or would like more personal teaching. Nearly all clubs should offer personal training from experienced players, teachers or bridge professionals all year round.

### **Class sizes?**

Some teachers like to teach classes of 30-50 students or even more, however is this best for the student? Would we let our kids attend school classes of this size? Most of the beginners are aged 55+ and bridge is not an easy game to learn let alone for those not comfortable with lecturing, using white boards or reading notes and bridge books.

### **Why regular supervised sessions all year?**

The largest drop out point for beginners is moving from classes to supervised play. Clubs need to provide supervised and novice/rookie sections every week, during the day and evening, so that beginners can become comfortable playing bridge before moving into the more competitive intermediate and open sections.

### **What is the Buddy System?**

When beginners are taking lessons and moving to supervised many are often insecure and very doubtful of their ability to learn bridge. They need support and confidence building to overcome this difficult stage. The role of the buddy is to maintain contact with the student and encourage them to keep coming to the sessions and preferably playing with them on a few occasions.

Some clubs have introduced the Buddy system including Toowong in Brisbane highly successfully and a far larger program in regional New Zealand which has proved a winner with many of the smaller clubs creating membership growth.

### **The Role of a Buddy?**

The Buddies do not have to be expert players but people who are good at providing support and encouragement. The Buddies are not there to teach more sophisticated systems or techniques but to help the players with the level of bridge they are being taught by their teachers. It is hoped that more experienced players would play with beginners for about three sessions an intake with the objective of convincing the beginners to become regular bridge members.

### **Lessons before all Supervised sessions?**

Many clubs find lessons before sessions to be very popular. The North Shore Bridge Club, which is the largest bridge club in Australia with nearly 1600 home club members and a growth rate of 8% The NSBC has lessons before all eight supervised and rookie sessions a week and a more advanced lesson before an Open session on Fridays. Though only a few clubs can compete with the size of the NSBC all clubs will need to provide lessons before supervised sessions to gain a grant.

### **Why do we need to conduct Entry and Exit Surveys?**

This will enable the clubs to better understand the needs of beginners and the strengths and weaknesses of their beginners classes and supervised sessions and how they could be improved from the students point of view. It will also provide the clubs with information on why people dropped out and the information to contact those people and try and encourage them to return.

The ABF will gain a more holistic view from beginners all over Australia and how our understanding, policies and grants could be better improved.

**Why do the clubs need to provide the Facebook Reports and Analysis to the ABF?**

To enable the ABF to analyse the results overall of the Facebook Campaigns to determine if there was a ROI on marketing expenditure and whether to continue in the future.

Further to drill down and learn what aspects of the campaigns were successful and those that failed to improve the advertising campaign performance for other participants.

**Assistance**

If you can provide photos, copy or input from your experiences that would be of value to the ABF and clubs around Australia your contributions would be greatly appreciated.

If you would like any assistance or further information then please contact Peter Cox at [marketing@abf.com.au](mailto:marketing@abf.com.au) or on 0413 676 326