

Sisters in Crime, Inc. – Launching a New Chapter Guidelines

So, you're interested in launching a new chapter of Sisters in Crime, Inc., but not sure what it will take? Here's an overview of the next steps to launch a new SinC chapter.

First off, plan on 4-6 months to get the new chapter up and running. Helpful suggestions and details are also available in SinC's Chapter Handbook, available on the Chapter page of the website, but basically:

1. You will need at least 3-4 other members who will commit to being officers for the launch year (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary). Other chapter positions helpful to have are:
 - a. Web Mistress, to build and maintain a chapter website or Facebook page;
 - b. Membership Chair, to keep track of membership data and/or a membership campaign;
 - c. Program Chair, to find interesting speakers for your meetings.
2. Develop a launch timeline. Generally, it takes 4-6 months to get a new chapter up and running.
3. Call a general public meeting, and announce your interest in launching a new SinC chapter.
 - a. Use social media to get the word out –Twitter, MeetUp, Facebook, etc., and use local venues like bookstores, coffee shops, or libraries.
 - b. Make it clear that you are “forming a new chapter” of SinC.
 - c. Because of trademark restrictions, you cannot use the National SinC logo in your new chapter materials. Eventually, you will develop an individual chapter logo for your communications, but that is a little bit further down the road.
4. Develop a preliminary chapter name. Some chapters use puns (i.e., Derby Rotten Scoundrels); others pick a figurehead (i.e., The Mary Roberts Rinehart Pittsburgh chapter). Your new members will eventually vote on the chapter's name.
5. Executive Director Beth Wasson can supply membership pins, bookmarks, and samples of InSinC, the quarterly SinC publication, free of charge.
6. Consult a tax attorney for the individual organizational requirements of your state. SinC National is registered as a tax-exempt 501(c)6 organization, but this tax status will not apply to your chapter. This needs to be covered on an individual chapter basis, since requirements vary by state.
7. You will need to apply for a tax identification number before the Treasurer sets up the chapter's bank account. More than one signatory on the account is recommended. Usually, two or three of the officers can sign. A chapter PayPal account is also helpful since some members like to pay their dues electronically.

You'll need an email address for PayPal. Setting up a chapter Gmail account is easy enough to do. The provisional Board can decide on the amount of dues to charge. Keep the dues as low as possible, with enough to cover expenses (like the website) without accruing a pool of unspent cash. Generally, the average annual chapter membership dues are \$20.

8. All members must also join the national SinC organization. There is a price break for any member who joins SinC during October of each year; membership dues cover the next 15 months (i.e., through the following full year). Verify that all of your new members belong to the national SinC organization before accepting them into your chapter. A membership roll is available on the national web site.
9. Schedule regular meetings. Once a quorum is met (as defined in your new By-Laws, and a generic By-Laws template is available on SinC's website), have the members vote to approve the By-Laws, and hold an officer election.

That's it!

For even more helpful ideas and suggestions, log onto the SinC site and review the **Chapter Handbook** PDF located on the Chapters page.

Other Suggestions:

- Schedule monthly meetings with interesting topics. Invite a private investigator to speak, or a State Trooper; this can attract new members.
- Officers should join the Chapter Presidents' Yahoo listserv, and ask for advice!
- Meeting rooms are generally available through bookstores, churches, libraries, and restaurants.
- Don't be afraid to move the meeting location around town, especially if your members are spread out across a large metropolitan area. Members appreciate the effort to meet closer to their own home at least some of the time.
- Promote local book festivals or author launches. Chapter event grants in amounts of \$250, \$500, and even \$1,000 are available to help fund your events. Details and grant guidelines are available on the Chapters page of SinC's website.
- Ask members to check with local libraries and share details of SinC's We Love Libraries raffle.
- Consider hosting a one-day workshop, a weekend Retreat, or publishing a chapter anthology.
- Reach out to nearby chapters to see about developing a partnership.