



Leader Recruitment and Retention Best Practices

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Introduction

Activity leaders are the lifeblood of AMC. We all know the importance of recruiting new talent and retaining enthusiastic leaders. If we do not work diligently on both recruitment and retention, the number of active leaders will diminish over time, as will the number of activities AMC offers.

What are some of the ways we can recruit new leaders and retain our experienced leaders? This Leader Recruitment and Retention Best Practices document provides suggestions. The document was compiled by an Outdoor Leadership Development Committee working group with representation from most chapters, other volunteer club units (VCUs), and interchapter committees. Our goal is to provide chapters with suggestions which can be tailored for their needs.

Chapters

- Chapters are responsible for developing their own methods for leader recruiting and retention. That authority comes with the responsibility to treat everyone fairly and be sure that no one is favored or disfavored in their quest to be a leader if they meet documented requirements. The AMC Leader Requirements and Guidelines (LRG) requires that chapters publish their leadership guidelines and requirements in a manner easily accessible to new and prospective leaders.

Chapter Chairs

- Chapter Chairs are the chief executives of their respective chapters. They are responsible for the chapter following AMC guidelines and chapter requirements. It is the expectation that the Chapter Chair helps ensure that leader recruitment and retention practices are implemented consistently. The Chapter Chair should work with their Executive Committee to establish responsibility for those practices they intend to implement. Specific functions may be delegated to committee chairs such as Activity, Leadership, Education, and Communication chairs. This will vary by chapter based on the structure of their chapter.

Interchapter Committees

- Interchapter committees such as ITC (Trails), IPC (Paddling) and ICC (Climbing) also play an important role. Interchapter committee members, who are primarily the chapter activity chairs, can select the best practices that they think will engage leaders in their activity.

This is a living document. We plan regular updates, which will reflect the successes and challenges of implementing best practices so that we can improve over time. Updates will weave in important work currently underway to increase belonging and community.

Usage of This Document

AMC continually strives for a positive culture that embraces AMC's mission and values of joyfully celebrating the outdoors and striving for all people involved to feel welcome. This is what sets AMC leaders and activities apart from other groups.

The best practices below are suggestions, not mandates. If your chapter is already strong in recruitment and retention, look over the suggestions to see if there is something additional that would be useful. If you recognize your chapter could improve, scan the document to select some ideas. We provide a variety of examples so you can select what works best for your group.

Each best practice has three sections:

- An overview explaining why each practice is important.
- Suggestions on how to implement the practice.
- Detailed examples.

They are provided to give you tangible suggestions for how to move forward. Choose what is appropriate for you and what your Executive Committee has the bandwidth to incorporate. After you have had success, come back and consider some other suggestions.

If you want support starting the process of implementing new best practices, reach out to resources available to you, including your Community Engagement liaison, Regional Director, other Chapter Chairs, the OLDC, and Interchapter Committees (paddling, climbing, and trails).

Budget and Resources

Some of the best practices below require a budget. All require people to make them part of your chapter's ongoing practices and culture.

Where does the budget come from? All chapters receive a portion of member dues from AMC, which is based on the number of members in their chapter. An important use of the funds is supporting leader recruitment and retention. Although larger chapters have more budget, smaller chapters have successfully budgeted for leader recognition gifts and events. The gifts may be smaller than those of a larger chapter, but experience is that leaders appreciate the recognition and don't focus on the dollars spent.

Your Executive Committee and other chapter volunteers are important resources as well. We recognize the chapter volunteers only have so much bandwidth. Nonetheless, some of the suggestions below have been incorporated by smaller chapters. They were successful because they chose a few items to work on and made the practice part of their operations. Start small. Then add another practice when you're ready. The intention is for this to be a do-able and valuable process.

Scope of This Document

The scope of this document is recruiting active participants to become activity leaders and retaining experienced leaders. There are other topics that are related to these goals, but not in scope for this document. Those topics include leader training, development, mentoring, and new member outreach. There are other committees, staff, and volunteers who support those important initiatives.

Leader training, development, and mentoring is key to developing leaders-in-training, as well as building the skills of active leaders. AMC provides leader training guidelines and support. AMC has developed an online training module, Outdoor Leader Fundamentals, which is planned for rollout in 2025. Some chapters have built ongoing leadership training, which they have developed over the years. AMC plans on developing mentorship guidelines. We don't want to duplicate these efforts in this document.

The recruitment best practices in this document focus on active participants who your leaders meet on their activities. Outreach for new members and participants is out of scope for this document. Increasing membership and participation, particularly by communities not well represented in AMC activities, is a worthy goal and an important facet of AMC's vision.

Best Practices

The best practices pathway is to engage participants, support new leaders, celebrate active leaders, communicate with your leaders, and support ongoing leader training. Outdoors Connector system reports may help you identify which leaders and tasks need more support.

Click on each link to see why that best practice is important, how to implement it, and some examples.

[Encourage Participants to Become Leaders](#)

[Support New Leaders](#)

[Celebrate Active Leaders](#)

[Communicate with Your Leaders](#)

[Support Ongoing Leader Training](#)

[Monitor with System Reports](#)