



Encourage Participants to Become Leaders

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Why Encouraging Participants to Become Leaders is Important

Active participants enjoy our activities. They see the leaders in action. They have already learned something about the AMC culture and leader practices through observation. They have demonstrated their abilities. At least one leader, perhaps several, knows them and could potentially serve as mentors.

Encouraging participants to become leaders shows that we value them. When they step up, they in turn serve to encourage other participants to get more involved. But, without active encouragement, participants may not realize chapters want and need their help. They may feel they do not have the qualifications or would have to do more than they are willing.

Participation in chapter activities pertains to new Leaders in Training (LITs) not to leaders from other chapters intending to lead with a different chapter. Leaders from other chapters who want to be added as activity leaders in your chapter would contact your Chapter Chair or Executive Committee to learn any specific chapter requirements for transferring their credentials to your chapter.

How to Encourage Participants to Become Leaders

- Create a culture in which leaders feel comfortable talking to participants about becoming leaders. This starts with the management teams of the chapters and interchapter committees. The Chapter Chair and the chairs of activity, education, and training committees should communicate regularly with current leaders about the need for recruiting new leaders.
- Create some talking points that leaders can use when talking to participants.
- Use your communication methods to promote leadership, e.g. newsletter, website, membership and leader emails, and social media. Create some standard bullet points that can be adjusted to craft fresh messages.

- Schedule your leader training at set times of the year so participants know when to expect it.
- This best practice should not require a budget. However, if your chapter charges for training, consider offering scholarships to those participants who have financial need.

Examples

- Communicate to your leaders that we want their help encouraging participants to consider leadership. Provide leader talking points about what's involved in becoming a leader and expectations for an active leader.
- Have leaders promote upcoming leader training events.
- Consider having a potential LIT act as an informal co-leader. Have the leader explain the trailhead talk, route planning, and monitoring of the group.
- When engaging with individuals, ask leaders to be mindful of being inclusionary and not to only talk to the most outgoing participants. Cultivate belonging. If someone hears others being encouraged, but nobody talks to them, they could feel discouraged and excluded.
- Ask leaders to submit articles to the chapter newsletter, website blogs, and posts on social media in which they describe their joy in being a leader.
- Consider holding a regular series of activities, e.g. a weekly seasonal hike in a certain area. With a series, you may get a lot of repeat participants who develop camaraderie with each other and the leaders. That can be a pipeline for new leaders.
- Using metrics from Outdoors Connector, periodically identify active participants who are involved in multiple trips/activities. Contact them with information about leadership. Assign responsibility for this role. This could be an assigned role of the Executive Committee, the Chapter Chair, or the chair of the leadership, activity, or education committees.
- Conduct a webinar information session one or more times a year – “So you want to be an AMC activity leader” – to describe what is involved. Tell them the specific process: training, being assigned a mentor, and co-leading. Make leadership enticing. Have current leaders describe why they love being leaders. Invite all recent participants from a set period (past 3, 6, or 12 months.)

- When a leader is newly certified, have their mentor on that activity tell the group that we are grateful they became a leader. Ask the new leader to describe how they decided to become a leader.
- Encourage leaders to add a social component to their activities. The more connection the participant feels with fellow participants and leaders, the more likely they will want to be involved. This can be stopping, after the activity, at a local venue for a beverage or meal.
- Include a brief statement in activity postings that we are always looking for new leaders.
- Create a place for participants to “sign up” to find out about future leadership training opportunities.
- Include a link to leadership training opportunities on your chapter website.
- When a potential leader signs up for leader training, ask what chapter activities they have participated in as part of a pre-training questionnaire. If the potential leader-in-training has not yet participated, engage them in a friendly dialogue about their interest in leading with the chapter. Talk with them about AMC practices and values and ask how they compare with their experience.
- When experienced leaders are communicating in the ways described above, they should consider whether or not their communications are reaching people who have traditionally been underrepresented in the outdoors and in chapter activities. Such participants may benefit from:
 - hearing from an experienced leader or LIT with whom they share background and/or experience, even if the experienced leader or LIT is from another chapter;
 - having a new leader recruitment webinar tailored for affinity groups,
 - having an assigned mentor with whom they share background and/or experience, even if the experienced leader or LIT is from another chapter.