



Support New Leaders

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Why Supporting New Leaders is Important

New activity leaders are eager, but that enthusiasm can dim if they don't have the support they need to be successful or if they don't feel appreciated.

Leaders-in-training (LITs) receive a lot of information, but it's not realistic to expect that they have memorized it all. New leaders can get frustrated if they don't know where to find this information. Therefore, knowing where to easily access resources is a huge help. These resources provide AMC's current policies and guidelines, definitions of common terminology, and required paperwork and forms.

Announcing new leaders provides public recognition of the leader's accomplishment. Consistency in thanking all new leaders builds community and loyalty. Communicating about new leaders demonstrates to regular participants and other members that we value our leaders, which may encourage others to become leaders.

Providing a knowledge-sharing forum where new leaders can ask questions and experienced leaders can share knowledge not only supports new leaders, it also helps build the leader community. New leaders get to know the experienced leaders which can foster opportunities for co-leads.

Seek input and feedback from new leaders on an ongoing basis. They may help identify obstacles that keep them from being as effective as possible and from enjoying their leadership experiences.

There are personal costs to becoming a new leader above and beyond the time and energy required. Check with new leaders regarding how they view the monetary costs, travel costs, social costs, etc. If your chapter can budget for it, provide the monetary or other support needed to address these costs fairly.

Where appropriate, and when it can be done in a fair and equitable manner, be flexible in how the requirements for new leaders are implemented. For example, consider reducing the training burden for a LIT who comes with training and experience in outdoor leadership from outside of AMC. Note that training must still meet AMC requirements.

In addition to the above, new leaders from communities that have traditionally been underrepresented in the outdoors and in chapter activities may benefit from having opportunities to debrief and discuss their experiences with other AMC leaders (from within and outside the chapter) who share similar background and experience, i.e. an affinity group. Encourage and support new leaders to select mentors and co-leaders with whom they have affinity. Encourage them to offer activities/trips for their affinity groups, to maximize their leadership effectiveness and their own sense of comfort and belonging.

How to Provide Support

Resources

- In leader training, provide leaders-in-training with the link to the [AMC Volunteer Resources](#) page. Also provide links to the chapter website which provides chapter-specific information. When the leader has been certified, follow up with an email that includes the links to these sites. Send the link to the [Volunteer SharePoint](#) to newly certified leaders.

Recognition

- Use existing communication channels to recognize new leaders. This can be member emails, leader emails, chapter newsletter, social media, or website blog. Whatever process your group chooses to follow for this Best Practice, you should strive to do it for all new leaders. This will demotivate if only some new leaders are recognized.

New Leader Kit

- Consider presenting a new leader kit at the end of a leader's first activity as full leader. This could be presented by the mentor, activity chair, or some other experienced leader. The presenter gives a brief speech thanking the new leader and praises their accomplishment. The intent is to provide recognition. You do not need to spend a lot on kit items. Your chapter sets your kit budget based on what's feasible. Allocate budget. Take pictures of the kit presentation for use in newsletters or social media.

Knowledge Sharing Forum

- Have regular Zoom sessions for new leaders where they can ask questions, get refreshers on topics, and learn from experienced leaders. Solicit new leaders to suggest topics or questions for discussion. This forum can also be an opportunity for new leaders to share what has been challenging and

also to share their successes. Embrace a culture in which difficulties are seen as learning opportunities, not as failures. For new leaders from communities that have traditionally been underrepresented in the outdoors and in chapter activities, consider having sessions with an affinity group of new leaders, possibly spanning more than one chapter.

Example of Ways to Support New Leaders

Resources

- Provide the link to [AMC Volunteer Resources](#). There are many documents and forms, all of which are useful to leaders.
- Chapter websites should include chapter-specific leader requirements.

Recognition

- Publish notification of new leaders via newsletter articles, social media posts, or website updates.
- Prepare a short template for items to include in the write up to make the process easier for the person who writes the recognition.
 - In practice, chapter mentors that do this have found it easy to write an article based on their experience with the leader. The template could be useful for those who want guidance.
- The recognition write up should be short and positive. If there were minor glitches in the activity, do not include them in the article. If they were certified to lead, then presumably the glitch was not material. If possible, include anecdotes. They are fun to read.
- Include a picture of the leader, preferably from their activity. If they were presented with a new leader kit, that photo would be great to include.
- Be respectful of individual privacy considerations and confer with the leader to be recognized in advance of publicizing their successes.

New Leader Kit

- When selecting items for the kit, consider the activity.
- Include an AMC leader patch or a chapter branded leader patch.
- Include items that the chapter requires leaders to have on their activities, such as a first aid kit.
- Where feasible, provide AMC- or chapter-branded items.
- Tangible gift items are preferred to gift cards.

- Include fun items to fill out the bag - nutrition bars, hand warmers, bug wipes, SPF lip balm, snack foods.
- Be sensitive to different cultures and backgrounds when selecting gift items.

Knowledge Sharing Forum

- Depending on the training cycle for your chapter, this could be an ongoing series or a six month series that directly follows leader training. A potential drawback of constraining the time period is leaders-in-training progress on different timeframes. However, we recognize that supporting monthly online webinar sessions requires people providing that support, which takes time and energy. Consider what frequency works best for your chapter e.g. monthly, quarterly, for a set period after training, etc.
- Leaders of online webinars should be experienced leaders comfortable leading such sessions.
- Solicit topics from new leaders in advance of the meeting.
- Allow for a free discussion to see what questions the new leaders have.
- In addition to topics submitted and free discussion, consider reviewing the following:
 - Some of the Leadership Workshop information (Leaders can also be directed to Outdoor Leader Fundamentals online modules for refresher when they become available.)
 - Consider highlighting a common topic or question, i.e. “FAQs”
 - Basic equipment needed for each season
 - How to plan and submit an activity
 - What to bring on an activity including paperwork
 - How to use navigation tools (All Trails, Gaia, etc.)