



VCC Leader Recruitment and Retention Best Practices

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Introduction

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 well as the number of activities AMC offers. The Volunteer Camps and Cabins (VCC) are in the fortunate position of the multitude of returning guests, allowing a volunteer baseline.

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 Volunteer Camps and Cabins (VCC) and Chapters with suggestions which can be tailored for their needs. This guide is specifically for VCCs.

- VCCs 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.
- VCC Chairs are the chief executives of their sites. They are responsible for the VCC following the operating rules for each camp. The Chair should help ensure leader recruitment and retention practices are implemented consistently.

Interchapter committees such as ICPC (Paddling) and ICC (Climbing) also play an important role. Committee members, who are primarily VCC guests who are already dedicated to VCC activities, can help promote leadership at VCCs.

Usage of This Document

A positive culture that embraces AMC's mission and values of joyfully celebrating the outdoors and making all people feel welcome is what sets AMC leaders and activities apart from other groups.

These best practices are suggestions, not mandates. If your VCC is already strong in recruitment and retention, look over the suggestions to see if there's something additional that would be useful. If you recognize your VCC 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 the practice is important, suggestions on how to implement, and detailed examples. They are provided to give you tangible suggestions for how to move forward. Choose what is appropriate for you and what your team has the bandwidth to incorporate. After you've had success, come back and consider some other suggestions.

If you want support starting the process of implementing new best practices, reach out to the Outdoor Leadership Development Committee (OLDC.)

Budget and Resources

Some of the actions require a budget. All require people to make them part of your VCCs ongoing practices and culture.

Annually, as a budget is determined, create a line-item for volunteer expenses. It is up to each VCC committee to determine the appropriate amount. The goal is to remove any roadblocks in becoming a leader and recognition once they are leaders. Your camp committee and other volunteers are important resources. We recognize that volunteers only have so much bandwidth. Start small. Then add another practice when you're ready.

Scope of This Document

The scope of this document is recruiting active VCC participants and chapter leaders to become VCC leaders and to retain experienced leaders. There are other

topics that are related to these goals but not in scope for this document. Those topics are leader training, development, mentoring, and new member outreach. There are other committees, staff, and volunteers who support these 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 developed an online training module, Outdoor Leader Fundamentals, which was rolled out in 2025. Some chapters have built ongoing leadership training which is available to VCC leaders. AMC is developing mentorship guidelines. We don't want to duplicate these efforts in this document.

The recruitment best practices in this document focus on active VCC participants and current chapter leaders. Building chapter leadership and outreach for new 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. That significant endeavor is being worked on as part of Community Engagement initiatives which commenced in Q2 2024. There are four Community Engagement working groups which kicked off their work in August 2024. Their relevant recommendations regarding recruitment and retention should be incorporated in a future phase of this Best Practice document.

Best Practices

The best practices pathway is to engage participants, chapter leaders, and VCC camp leaders, support new leaders, celebrate active leaders, and communicate with your community.

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

[VCC Encourage Participants to Become Leaders](#)

[VCC Support New Leaders](#)

[VCC Celebrate Active Leaders](#)

[VCC Communicate with Your Leaders](#)