

CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK



Gulf Coast Chapter Texas Master Naturalist Program

[This document is intended to assist the TMN Program Chartered Chapter in structuring its operational procedures and to provide insight into areas of flexibility to meet local Chapter circumstances, needs and resources. This document should be a one-stop resource for all members of the Chapter and should contain all day-to-day operational procedures and references in the Appendices. All local options, policies and procedures contained in the local Chapter Operating Handbook must meet the requirements of the approved and adopted Chapter Bylaws and the State Chapter Management Operations and Protocols.]

CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

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OPERATING HANDBOOK

Gulf Coast Chapter

Texas Master Naturalist Program

I: CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

The documents governing the Chapter will be this Chapter's Bylaws and the guiding practices found in the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the Chapter's Operating Handbook. In case of conflicting language, first the Chapter's Bylaws, second the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols shall govern the Chapter's Operating Handbook. The Chapter will be structured for governance as follows.

A. BOARD

1. Officers

The duly elected Officers shall consist of:

- President
- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Secretary

The terms and limits of office: All elected Officers shall serve for a period of 12 months or a period of 24 months, and are eligible for re-election.

2. Duties of Officers

{The Chapter is encouraged to add or modify items to the listed duties as required by the Chapter's operational requirements while adhering to the strict requirements of the Chapter's Bylaws and the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols}.

The duties of Officers are defined in the following:

President

- a. Serve as Chair of the Board of Directors
- b. Prepare and distribute the agenda for Board meetings
- c. Preside over Board and Chapter meetings
- d. Sign all Board-approved documents that may be legally binding on the Chapter
- e. Co-sign checks with the Treasurer for amounts over \$1000
- f. Present a summary of the Chapter's accomplishments at the Chapter's first general meeting of the new year
- g. Prepare correspondence between the Chapter and the State Office, other Chapters or State agencies as appropriate
- h. Review Chapter's completed annual report before submission to State office

- i. Communicate with Board and Chapter Members as needed; conduct email votes on issues between meetings
- j. Appoint all committee Chairs and be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
- k. Appoint and present a slate of candidates for all new Director positions for review and approval by a majority vote of the elected Officers, Past-President, and Advisor(s)
- l. Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President
- m. Encourage all Officers and Directors to read and be familiar with their duties, responsibilities and program guiding documents (i.e. Bylaws, Protocols, etc) stated in the Chapter Operating Handbook
- n. Be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate

{Options}

- Facilitate a retreat of all newly elected Officers and Directors with the outgoing Board members before the first Board meeting in January to facilitate responsibility exchange and chart the Chapter's new year
- Write donor-appreciation letters
- Present Recognition Awards to out-going Officers and Board members

Vice President

- a. Assist the President and act for the President in his absence
- b. Prior to the September Board meeting, meet with the President to establish Chapter and Board meeting dates for the following year, to be presented for review and approval at the September Board meeting
- c. Participate as a member of the Annual Financial Examination Committee

{Options}

- Chair the Program Committee scheduling Chapter programs for membership meetings
- Select and secure the venue for monthly Chapter meetings for the following year based on approved Board meeting dates
- Schedule Chapter field trips
- Schedule and coordinate annual Chapter social activities

Treasurer

- a. Receive all dues and monies for the Chapter and maintain them in a Chapter bank account
- b. Develop and maintain an annual budget for the Chapter with input and approval by the Board of Directors
- c. Pay all bills upon receipt of a written statement or receipt. Treasurer or President and one other Officer shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of money or notes of the Chapter
- d. Submit all annual financial records, reports and audits as required by law (and/or sponsoring agencies)
- e. Make a financial report at all Board meetings

- f. Present the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee before the last Board meeting of the calendar year
- g. Keep an account of all income, expenses, disbursements and other financial matters including a hard copy file of such documentation for seven years plus the current calendar year
- h. Make available all financial reports and documents to any Chapter member and/or Advisors as may be requested

Secretary

- a. Conduct all necessary Chapter correspondence
- b. Record, publish and preserve the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors, General Membership meetings or special meetings
- c. Furnish the minutes to all Board members and make them available to other Chapter members when requested
- d. Keep a record of attendance at each meeting and whether a quorum is present
- e. Maintain a hard copy file of all minutes and correspondence

{Options}

- Bring to each Board meeting the minute book, a copy of the Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, the Chapter Operating Handbook, a list of all committee membership and a copy of the parliamentary authority adopted by the Chapter.

3. Directors

The duly Appointed Directors shall consist of, but not limited to, the following:

- Immediate Past President
- Membership Director
- New Class Director
- Communications Director
- Advanced Training Director
- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- New Class Representative
- Advisor(s)

All Director positions are by appointment and approved according to the Chapter Bylaws ARTICLE V, F and G.

The terms and limits of office: All appointed Directors shall serve for a period of 12 months or a period of 24 months, and are eligible for re-election.

4. Duties of Directors

The duties of Directors shall be to assist the Officers in their respective responsibilities. In addition, their specific duties are listed under their title in the local Chapter Operating Handbook as required for the operation of the Chapter. All Directors are voting members of the Board. The list which follows may be considered the critical appointments for a successful Chapter operation, but is not intended to encompass all requirements a Chapter

may have. Neither does it state all responsibilities that may be required of a Director's position.

- Immediate Past President
 - a. Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors with counsel for undocumented procedures and works to document those procedures
 - b. Leads an annual review and update if necessary of the Chapter's Chapter Operating Handbook document
 - c. Assist the President
 - d. Assume the responsibility as the State Representative for the Chapter if that position is not otherwise filled
 - e. Chair the Nominating Committee...Ref. Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E, 2
 - f. In the absence of an Immediate Past President, the President will reassign above responsibilities as needed

- Membership Director
 - a. Maintain a roster of all Chapter members with pertinent contact information
 - b. Oversee Chapter position of Data Manager
 - c. Monthly maintain and publish names of members achieving certification and milestone awards
 - d. Present awards frequently at Chapter meetings
 - e. Organize, publicize and manage new class application process
 - f. Manage the Chapter's Mentor Program (Ref. State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix II, Mentor Program)
 - g. Manage the Chapter's use of the TMN Volunteer Management System (VMS), (Ref. State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI, Volunteer Service Requirements) for reporting volunteer service hours and Advanced Training
 - h. For Chapter Members not having access to the VMS, provide the Chapter Activity form for reporting Volunteer Project and Advanced Training hours by members
 - i. Ensure new members/trainees receive appropriate training to use the TMN VMS
 - j. Compile the State Annual Report with the support of the preceding year's President and Data Manager

- New Class Director
 - a. Form the Training Committee
 - b. Serve as Manager for the New Class, planning, curriculum development, calendar, instructors, venue, reception, etc., through graduation
 - c. Recommend the class tuition to the Board of Directors
 - d. Work with Membership and Communications Directors to develop the New Class recruiting brochure
 - e. Work with the Membership Director to manage the Mentor Program and the new class application process.

- f. Ensures new members/trainees receive appropriate training to use the TMN VMS.
- Communications Director
 - a. Oversee positions of:
 - Publicity Manager
 - Newsletter Editor
 - Webmaster
 - Archivist
 - b. Write publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering New Class application, Chapter meetings and special events
 - c. Arrange for printing and distribution of New Class recruiting brochure
- Advanced Training Director
 - a. Develop a form for members to request that a program be considered for an Advanced Training Code
 - b. Review and recommend for approval or disapproval all Advanced Training requests and events.
 - c. Assign Advanced Training Codes and Advanced Training Titles to qualifying events and notify Chapter membership of approved Advanced Training opportunities
 - d. Set up and manage Advanced Training opportunities in the Chapter's TMN VMS
 - e. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Advanced Training Requirements, including VMS, as a guide to review and approve Advanced Training Codes
- Volunteer Service Projects Director
 - a. Develop a form for members to request a Volunteer Service Project Code
 - b. Review and recommend for approval or disapproval all Chapter volunteer service project opportunity requests using the State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VII Volunteer Service Requirements as a guide to review and approve.
 - c. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Volunteer Service Requirements, including VMS, as a guide to review and approve Volunteer Service Project Codes
 - d. Assign Volunteer Service Project Codes to qualifying projects and publicize to Chapter members
- New Class Representative
 - a. Represent the New Class as a member on the Board
 - b. Participate as a member of the New Class Committee
 - c. Participate as a member of the annual Financial Examination Committee

- Advisor(s)
Reference State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix I,
Advisor Guidelines

The Chapter-Advisor relationship is not a one-way street, in that the Chapter and its leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for Advisor interaction and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD

The Board is responsible for the success of the Chapter and has the authority to conduct the business of the Chapter as defined in the Chapter Bylaws, approved by the membership. Board approval requires either a majority vote of Board members in attendance at a Board meeting where a quorum is present, or a majority vote of Board members via electronic media.

All official Board communications, i.e., voting, etc., via electronic media, shall be recorded and contained in the Chapter Secretary's records.

1. Committee Oversight. All committees and their activities are subject to review and approval by the Board.
2. Expenditure Limits. The Board will honor expenditure limits as set forth in the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
3. Chapter Business. The Board shall conduct the business functions of the Chapter as may be stated in the Chapter Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
4. Establishment of Dues. The Board of Directors may, with approval of a majority of members present at a duly called and convened general membership meeting, set and change the amount of an initiation fee, if any, and the annual dues, if any, payable to the Chapter. The Board of Directors must notify all voting members 60 days prior to the general meeting that the subject of dues or their increase will be brought before the convened general membership for action. The Board of Directors, under special circumstances, may waive—in part or in whole-- individual membership fees on a case-by-case basis, if approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.
 - Dues Schedule. Dues shall be payable on or before the first day of January for each fiscal year. If dues are not paid by March 31 in each fiscal year, then all privileges afforded a certified member are rescinded until dues are paid.

C. COMMITTEES

All committees serve subject to the oversight and approval of the Board. The President appoints the Chair of the Standing Committees. The Chair is responsible for seeing that the Committee fulfills the responsibilities and objectives for which it was formed.

1. Standing Committees

{The Chapter must perform the following functions as outlined below; however the Chapter may combine functions or reorganize committee structures as required}

- Executive Committee
- Training Committee
- Membership Committee
- Volunteer Service Projects Committee
- Advanced Training Committee

{The following functions are required functions of the Chapter}

- Executive Committee
 - a. The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the Officers of the Chapter
 - b. Authority: Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article VI, B. 2. Authority

- Training Committee
 - a. Serves under the leadership of the New Class Director for the Chapter's training program.
 - b. Plans, implements and evaluates the Chapter training curriculum and develops training calendar
 - c. Acquires the TMN State Curriculum for new class trainees and prepares additional class materials
 - d. Select all presenters and make arrangements for their class/presentation including materials, handouts and audio-visual equipment needed for the class/presentation
 - e. Arranges for speaker gifts, travel, lodging needs, confirmation, and thank you letters
 - f. Arranges for publicity – newspapers, flyers, brochures, electronic media
 - g. Arranges for training venue, and required facilities equipment for all class periods
 - h. Facilitates class field outings/trips
 - i. Hosts initial New Class social and presentation reception
 - j. Arranges for refreshment amenities during class periods

- Membership Committee

Serves under the leadership of the Membership Director, typically composed of the Data Manager

 - a. Manages and/or assists in managing the Chapter's records and reports within the TMN VMS.
 - b. Maintain a roster of the Chapter member names, including in-training members, plus pertinent contact information within the TMN VMS
 - c. Maintain a record of volunteer and advanced training hours within the TMN VMS
 - d. Supports Membership Director with compilation of the State Annual Report
 - e. Reports members achieving Certification and Milestone awards regularly

- Volunteer Service Projects Committee
 - a. Supports Volunteer Service Projects Director to review, organize, assign codes and notify Chapter members of approved Volunteer Service opportunities and projects.

- b. May assist in managing project opportunities with the Chapter's TMN VMS
- Advanced Training Committee
 - a. Supports Advanced Training Director to review, organize, assign codes and notify Chapter members of approved Advanced Training opportunities
 - b. Assist with managing the Chapter's Advanced Training Opportunities within the TMN VMS

{The following functions are optional functions the Chapter may desire to develop and adopt}

- Program Committee
 - a. Serves in support of the duties and responsibilities of the Vice President
- Newsletter Committee
 - a. Responsible for collecting Chapter and State TMN news, producing and distribution of the Chapter Newsletter
 - b. Officers, Directors and members may contribute to the contents of the Newsletter
 - c. May assist Chapter Communications Director
- Outreach Committee
 - a. Responsible for the Chapter outreach activities under the direction of the Membership Director
 - b. Staffs outreach booths
 - c. Acquires and maintains a Chapter display board
 - d. Coordinates activities with the Communications Director and the Chapter Webmaster
 - e. Assists the Training Committee in promoting the Chapter
 - f. May assist Chapter Communications Director, Communications Committee, New Class Director and/or Membership Director
- Historian/Archivist
 - a. Maintains the historical records of the Chapter under the direction of the Communications Director
 - b. Historical records include but not limited to: Training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, Chapter scrapbook and Chapter Newsletter archives
 - c. May assist the Chapter Secretary
- Host Committee
 - a. Assist Training Chairman with class host activities
 - b. Coordinates General Membership meeting host activities

2. AD HOC Committees

Ad Hoc committees are formed for a particular and specific short term purpose.

{The Chapter must perform the following functions outlined below}

- Annual Financial Examination Committee. Responsible for conducting the annual examination of the financial records of the Chapter. Members will include the Vice-President, New Class Representative, Secretary and/or Advisor. The President appoints the Chair person. The Treasurer provides the financial records for review.
- Officer Nomination Committee. Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E. 2. Election Process.

The Past President will chair the Officer Nomination Committee formed by Chapter Members who are appointed by the Chapter President. The committee will present their slate of Officer candidates to the President, taking into account the following attributes.

The Officer Nomination Committee shall endeavor to select candidates from the Chapter Membership who demonstrate appropriate skills for managing the office of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer; and where possible, with an eye to increasing diversity. Diversity being not limited to sex, race, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, formal education, background experience, and county of residence. Preference may be given to candidates whose total time in any Board capacity and total time of service in a single Board position is less than other candidates for the same position. Selection of candidates based on these additional diversity attributes would maintain experience and continuity for the Board while recruiting new members to serve. Officer candidates must be Certified Members of the Chapter, except for Chapters in their first year of operation.

The Officer Nomination Committee must review the required skills, duties and responsibilities of each Officer position with the proposed candidate to assess the candidate's understanding and willingness to perform the functions of the office prior to nominating the candidate for any position.

The President must publish the slate of candidates to the Chapter membership in writing, 15 days prior to the last general membership meeting before the end of the calendar year.

The Officer Nomination Committee will present a slate of candidates and conduct the election process at the last general membership meeting of the calendar year.

This committee will also serve when an Officer or Board vacancy occurs which requires candidates. The committee may serve at the request of the incoming President upon his/her election to present a slate of Director Candidates.

The State Master Naturalist Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

- Director Nomination Committee. Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, F. 3. Appointment Process for Board Members Other Than New Class Director. The Director Nomination Committee may be created at the discretion of the incoming President.

The incoming President will chair the Director Nomination Committee formed by Chapter Members who are appointed by the incoming Chapter President. The committee will present their slate of Director candidates to the incoming President, taking into account the following attributes.

The Director Nomination Committee shall endeavor to select candidates from the Chapter Membership who demonstrate appropriate skills and where possible, with an eye to increasing diversity. Diversity being not limited to sex, race, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, formal education, background experience, and county of residence. Preference may be given to candidates whose total time in any Board capacity and total time of service in a single Board position is less than other candidates for the same position. Selection of candidates based on these additional diversity attributes would maintain experience and continuity for the Board while recruiting new members to serve.

The Director Nomination Committee must review the required skills, duties and responsibilities of each Director position with the proposed candidate to assess the candidate's understanding and willingness to perform the functions of the position prior to nominating the candidate.

The incoming President will present a slate of Director candidates to the newly elected Officers, Past President and Advisor(s) for confirmation by a majority vote of this Executive Committee prior to the end of the calendar year in which they are elected.

The State Master Naturalist Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

- Other Ad Hoc Committees. May be formed by the Board as needed to address specific tasks or purposes.

II: MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a Chapter is open to qualifying individuals regardless of race, age (must be 18 years of age or older), sex, religion, disability or national origin.

Member Categories (Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article IV, Membership)

- Texas Master Naturalist in Training
- Texas Master Naturalist Pledge
- Certified Texas Master Naturalist

- Texas Master Naturalist Member
 - Honorary Texas Master Naturalist
1. Where Chapters have established dues, by a majority vote of Chapter members, a qualifying member must be current in the payment of those dues as defined by the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
 2. Members may readily transfer between Chapters within the State of Texas, but must meet all requirements of membership for the Chapter into which they are transferring.
 3. Members who may have been 'inactive' for some reason, may petition a local Chapter for reinstatement, providing all Chapter membership requirements are met.

III: ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF THE CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

1. Adoption.
 - a. Initial adoption and ratification of the COH and Appendices will be by a majority vote of those present at the next scheduled general membership meeting following written distribution of the proposed COH to the general membership ten (10) days before the meeting, with notice that the ratification vote will be held at the next general membership meeting.
 - b. Written distribution may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.
2. Amendment.
 - a. Changes and amendments may be proposed by the Board of Directors at a regular Board meeting with a two-thirds vote of the Board members in attendance. The general membership must be notified in written form of the proposed changes or amendments ten (10) days before the next Board meeting and be given an opportunity at that Board meeting to voice any concerns about the changes or amendments.
 - b. The general membership must then be notified in written form of the final proposed changes or amendments ten (10) days before the next general membership meeting at which time a membership vote will be held.
 - c. Written form may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.
3. State Office Notification

Once a Chapter has adopted a revised and/or amended Chapter Operating Handbook, an electronic copy must be sent to the State Office for its files.

IV: APPENDICES

{It is strongly recommended that Appendices be added pertaining to frequently referenced Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols or other reference documents helpful to both Board and Chapter members. When including language from the Chapter Bylaws, the language must be verbatim. Documentation from other State sources should also be included as written.}

Examples are:

- *Volunteer Project Policies*
- *Advanced Training Policies*
- *New Class Application Procedures*
- *Mentor Program*
- *Chapter Advisor Role and Qualifications*
- *Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters*
- *TMN Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct*
- *FAQs*