

CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

May 2019



**Cradle of Texas Chapter
Texas Master Naturalist Program**

CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

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OPERATING HANDBOOK

Cradle of Texas 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 and are eligible for re-election.

2. Duties of Officers

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 or another designated Chapter Officer for amounts greater than \$1000
- f. Authorize in writing credit/debit card and PayPal transactions for accounts greater than \$1000
- g. Present a summary of the Chapter's accomplishments at the Chapter's first general meeting of the new year
- h. Prepare correspondence between the Chapter and the State Office, other Chapters or State agencies as appropriate
- i. Review Chapter's completed annual report before submission to State office

- j. Communicate with Board and Chapter Members as needed; conduct votes electronically, e.g., email, on issues between meetings as required by Section B, Responsibilities of the Board paragraph 4
- k. Appoint all committee Chairs and be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
- l. 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)
- m. Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President for the duration of the next President's term
- n. 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
- o. Ensure that before the Chapter makes any written commitments to County Governments, City Councils, etc., or executes Contracts or Memorandums of Understanding with other entities, that the TMN State Coordinator's approval is obtained
- p. Be the Chapter's representative to State Annual Meeting or appoint a Chapter State Representative (See Chapter State Representative under 3. Directors)
- q. Refrain from the use of Chapter credit/debit cards or PayPal, as it is highly discouraged by the TMN State office. If a Chapter chooses to use credit/debit cards or PayPal for a transaction greater than \$1000, a written authorization from the President is required prior to the transaction
- r. Write donor-appreciation letters
- s. Present Recognition Awards to out-going Officers and Board Members
- t. Assure that background checks of members are conducted annually
- u. Finalize and maintain a Chapter Data Retention Policy approved by the Board.

Vice President

- a. Assist the President and act for the President in the President's 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
- d. Chair the Program Committee scheduling Chapter programs for membership meetings
- e. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.

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. The proposed budget should be finalized and submitted for approval prior to the start of the new calendar year
- c. Pay all bills promptly upon receipt of a written statement or receipt for approved expenses. Treasurer shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of

money or notes of the Chapter. In the absence of the Treasurer, the President and one other designated Officer may sign any instruments for payment or notes of the Chapter

- d. For any payments greater than \$1000, the Treasurer must co-sign the payment instrument with the President
- e. Submit all annual financial records, reports and audits as required by law (and/or sponsoring agencies)
- f. Present a financial report from the Chapter's financial management system at all Board meetings that includes the status of all financial transactions and bank statement reconciliations
- g. Present the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee before the last Board meeting of the calendar year
- h. 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
- i. Make available all financial reports and documents to any Chapter Member and/or Advisors as may be requested
- j. It is highly recommended that the Treasurer maintain the financial records of the Chapter using a financial management system such as QuickBooks, Quicken, or equivalent method software processing systems that is able to produce quality financial reports easily understandable by any Chapter Member and/or Advisor
- k. For Chapters who maintain a 501(c)(3), the Chapter's financial management system must meet Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) using either accrual, modified accrual accounting, or modified cash basis
- l. Retain all Chapter financial records for at least seven years according to the Chapter's Data Retention Policy (*a template for the policy may be found on the txmn.org website*)
- m. Provide the chapter Data Managers with a list of members who have paid dues each month.

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 or a secure digital record keeping system of all minutes and correspondence according to the Chapter's Data Retention policy.

3. Directors

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

- Immediate Past President
- Membership Director
- New Class Director
- Communications Director

- Outreach Director
- Advanced Training Director
- Volunteer Projects Director
- Chapter Host
- New Class Representative
- Chapter State Representative
- Chapter 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 and are eligible for re-appointment.

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 and Advisors 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. Chair the Nominating Committee per Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E, 2
 - e. In the absence of an Immediate Past President, the President will reassign above responsibilities as needed
 - f. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.
- Membership Director
 - a. Maintain a roster of all Chapter Members with pertinent contact information
 - b. Oversee Chapter Membership Committee including the position of Data Manager
 - c. Maintain and publish monthly 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. Supervise the VMS Chapter Data Manager(s) activity related to review and approval of volunteer service hours and advanced training for accuracy, correct categorization and appropriateness
 - i. Ensure all members receive appropriate training in the use of the TMN VMS.
 - j. Ensure all Member-in-Training receive appropriate training in the use of the TMN VMS and their training hours are recorded in TMN VMS
 - k. Compile the State Annual Report with the support of the preceding year's President and Data Manager
 - l. Approve of data manager hours in VMS
 - m. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.
- New Class Director
 - a. Oversees the development and utilization of the chapter Intern Training Committee
 - b. Serve as Manager for the Intern Training Class, planning, curriculum development, calendar, instructors, venue, reception, etc., through graduation
 - c. Recommend the class tuition to the Board of Directors for approval
 - 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. Assists the Membership Director to ensure each Member-in-Training receives appropriate training to use the TMN VMS
 - g. Provide intern training class information to the chapter Data Manager as needed to document Member-in-Training hours in TMN VMS
 - n. Submit the intern training class agenda and curriculum to the TMN State Program Office when changes are made
 - o. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.
- Communications (Media) Director
 - a. Oversee a committee(s) or positions performing the functions of:
 - Publicity Coordinator
 - Newsletter Editor
 - Webmaster
 - Historian / Archivist
 - Speakers Bureau Coordinator
 - 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
 - d. Oversee social media content and formats used by Chapter Members. Social media should follow TMN Marketing & ID Guidelines as well as TPWD and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service policies
 - e. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.

- Outreach Director
 - a. Coordinates the Chapter outreach activities
 - b. Ensures that outreach booths are staffed when planned
 - c. Provide impact data for each event to the chapter Data Manager after each event
 - d. Acquires and maintains a Chapter display board
 - e. Promotes chapter and recruits new members
 - f. Coordinates activities with the Chapter Webmaster
 - g. Assists the Training Committee in promoting the Chapter
 - h. Assists the New Class Director and Membership Director as necessary
 - i. Create and maintain educational displays used for outreach events, including Nature trunks, exhibits, and live animals
 - j. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.

- Advanced Training Director
 - a. Maintain 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 as needed
 - e. Add/Maintain AT events on the chapter Google calendar and providing reports about AT events to Board and General meetings
 - f. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI, Advanced Training Requirements, including VMS, to review and approve Advanced Training Codes
 - g. Assure that all Advanced Training Committee functions are completed
 - h. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.

- Volunteer Projects Director
 - a. Maintain 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. Add/Maintain VT events on the chapter Google calendar and providing reports about VT events to Board and General meetings
 - d. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Volunteer Service Requirements, including VMS, to review and approve Volunteer Service Project Codes
 - e. Ensures that a complete description of those Project activities for which volunteer service hours may be accumulated. Ensures detailed descriptions are promptly posted in Chapter VMS Opportunities

- f. Assign Volunteer Service Project Codes to qualifying projects and publicize to Chapter Members
 - g. Assure that all Volunteer Services Committee functions are completed
 - h. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.
- Chapter Host
 - a. Assists the New Class Director with class social activities
 - b. Coordinates General Membership meeting social activities
 - c. Arrange for members to bring snacks to each General Membership Meeting
 - d. Maintains a sufficient supply of drinks, paper goods, condiments, utensils and a ice chest for General Membership Meetings, intern training classes and field trips.
 - e. Ensures that tables for refreshments are set up prior to General Membership Meetings and organizes a clean-up crew after each meeting
 - f. Arranges for special refreshments at general membership meetings to honor members who reach a 4000 hour or 5000 hour achievement
 - g. Coordinate food for special chapter events including initial new class training meetings and bonus AT events.
 - New Class Representative
 - a. Represent the New Class as a member on the Board attending all Board meetings
 - b. Participate as a member of the New Class Committee
 - c. Participate as a member of the annual Financial Examination Committee
 - d. Attend selected New Class training sessions to provide the new class with insight into the New Class Representative Board position.
 - Chapter State Representative
 - a. Represent the Chapter in State-level matters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program
 - b. Review draft State Documents as requested
 - c. Help with coordination of activities at the Annual State Conference
 - d. Help in finding presenters for the Annual Conference
 - e. Enhance the communication between the State and the Chapters
 - f. Help guide and educate the Member Chapter's new Officers and Directors through use of the State governing documents
 - g. Participate in conference calls as requested
 - h. Attend the Annual State Conference, if possible
 - i. Attend the semi-annual State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings
 - j. Follows data retention policies for all records under his/her responsibility.
 - Chapter Advisor(s)

Reference TMN State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix I, Advisor Guidelines and Article V, B, State Bylaws

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 (Ref: Article VI, A. 2-3). All business before the Board requires approval of either a majority vote of Board Members in attendance at a Board meeting where a quorum is present, or a majority vote of all Board members using Remote Communications Technology.

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. Voting by Remote Communications Technology. A meeting of the Board or the Nominating Committee may be held by means of a remote electronic communications system, including videoconferencing technology, email, or the Internet, only if:
 - a. Three business days' notice is given to each person entitled to participate in the meeting and includes relevant information to be discussed; and
 - b. The system provides access to the meeting in a manner or using a method by which each person participating in the meeting can communicate with each other; and
 - c. Motions are made and votes are recorded in the written minutes of the meeting; and
 - d. Documentation of each of the requirements of paragraph a, b, and c above must be contained in the secretary's minutes.
5. 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. A Texas Master Naturalist Member who is not current in the payment of dues, if required, by the end of the calendar year, will be considered "inactive" for purposes of the State Annual Report.

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

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

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

- Membership Committee

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

 - a. Manages and/or assists in managing the Chapter's records and reports within the TMN VMS
 - b. Maintains a roster of the Chapter Members' names, including a Members-in-Training, plus pertinent contact information within the TMN VMS
 - c. Maintains a record of volunteer and advanced training hours within the TMN VMS
 - d. Provides support for compilation of the State Annual Report
 - e. Supports the Membership Director in ensuring that VMS time reported is accurate and fitting of the activity description and criteria
 - f. Frequently reports the names of Members who have achieved Certification, Re-certification, and Milestone awards so that the Members can quickly be recognized
 - g. Receives verification of member dues payments from the Treasurer and updates VMS records accordingly
 - h. Update COT member activity status
 - i. Define new COT members in VMS, including members already in TPWD system; review, track and update TMN activity status for new members
 - j. Document Board and Committee positions, specialty certifications, milestone achievements, and re-certifications in VMS
 - k. Create and run specialized VMS reports for chapter or partners, such as monthly impact data reports for AgriLife.

- Intern Training Committee
 - a. Serves under the leadership of the New Class Director for the Chapter's intern training program

- b. Plans, implements and evaluates the Chapter intern training curriculum and develops training calendar
 - c. Acquires the TMN State Curriculum for each new Member-in-Training 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. Works with the Communications Director to arrange 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.
- Communication Committee
 - a. Assists the Chapter Communications Director, as necessary
 - b. Includes a committee member to serve as a chapter webmaster
 - c. Includes a committee member to serve as a chapter newsletter editor
 - i. Collects, produces, and distributes Chapter and state TMN news in the Chapter’s newsletter
 - ii. Solicits and accepts contributions from Officers, Directors and Members for the newsletter
 - d. Includes a committee member to serve as a chapter Publicity Coordinator
 - i. Manages the chapter’s Facebook and Social Media activities
 - ii. Creates and distributes press releases to promote the chapter and its activities
 - e. Includes a committee member to serve as a chapter Speakers Bureau Coordinator
 - i. Survey chapter membership to determine who has interest in participating and skills needed (presentation development skills, speaking skills, support skills, etc.) and build team
 - ii. Develop library of “canned” presentations and put together trunks of educational materials to support specific topics as needed
 - iii. Coordinate with Brazoria County libraries to determine opportunities for chapter members to present programs for the general public
 - iv. Meet with organizations such as museums, preschools, daycares, shelters, clubs, etc. to assess needs and plan programs (Examples: program presentations; nature walks or urban walks; etc.)
 - v. Meet with school districts, particularly those on the northern side of Brazoria County, to determine what STEM-related educational programs can be developed. (Examples: class materials and presentations; educational activities and games; field trips to local parks and nature trails; etc.)
 - vi. Contact media to notify that Speakers Bureau is available for presentations and provide contact information
 - vii. Coordinate with Outreach Director and Volunteer Service Director as needed when screening and filling opportunities

- viii. Coordinate with Publicity Coordinator as needed to promote events, presentations and programs that are open to the public
 - f. Includes a committee member to serve as a chapter Historian/Archivist
 - i. Maintains the historical records of the Chapter under the direction of the Communications Director
 - ii. Historical records include but are not limited to: training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, Chapter scrapbook and Chapter Newsletter archives
 - g. Assists the Chapter Secretary as necessary.
- **Advanced Training Committee**
 - a. Supports Advanced Training Director in reviewing, organizing, assigning codes and notifying Chapter Members of approved Advanced Training opportunities
 - b. Assists in managing the Chapter's Advanced Training Opportunities within the TMN VMS
 - c. Assist with organizing special AT events.
 - **Volunteer Service Projects Committee**
 - a. Supports the Volunteer Service Projects Director in reviewing, organizing, assigning codes and notifying Chapter Members of approved Volunteer Service opportunities and projects
 - b. Assists in drafting a complete description of those project activities for which volunteer service hours may be accumulated and assures such detail descriptions are promptly posted in the Chapter VMS Opportunities
 - c. Assists in managing project opportunities with the Chapter's TMN VMS.

2. Ad Hoc Committees

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

- 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 Advisor(s) if applicable. The President appoints the Chair. The Treasurer provides the financial records for review. The results of the Financial Examination will be reported to the Board and recorded in the minutes of the following Board meeting with signed attestations from each member of the committee
- Officer Nomination Committee. Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E. 2. Election Process

The Past President will chair the Officer Nomination Committee. The President will appoint Chapter Members to serve on the Officer Nominating Committee. The committee will present its 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 is not limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but includes attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, 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 that requires candidates. The committee may serve at the request of the incoming President upon election to present a slate of Director Candidates.

The TMN State Program 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 its 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 is not limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but includes attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, 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 TMN State Program 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, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability or national origin. All persons who are Chapter Members or persons applying for TMN membership must submit to, and pass the required Criminal Background Check.

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 TMN State Coordinator within 30 days.

IV: APPENDICES

{It is recommended that Appendices be added pertaining to frequently referenced documents helpful to both Board and Chapter Members that are not already available on the state or Chapter's website. Referencing documents by including the website URL where appropriate provides helpful guidance to the reader, while allowing flexibility if changes are made to those documents outside of the COH approval process. When including language from the Chapter Bylaws, the language must be verbatim. Documentation from other state sources should also be included as written. Any appendices added or modified must also be approved by the Chapter membership as would any other change to the Chapter Operating Handbook}

Examples are:

- Criteria for Evaluating New Class Applications
- FAQs specific to the Chapter and not contained in the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols FAQs

Appendix 1

Additional Guidelines for Volunteer Service and Travel

The requirements for volunteer service hours are outlined in the CMOP (Chapter Management and Operations Protocol). Some additional guidelines are outlined below for TMN-COT. The list may not be all-inclusive. All questions should be directed to the chapter Volunteer Projects Director.

1. Volunteering with Chapter Sponsors

Chapter members are encouraged to volunteer for chapter projects and for projects and events conducted with our partner and sponsor organizations, including TPWD, AgriLife, USFWS, Brazoria County Library System, and Friends of Brazoria National Wildlife Refuges. All projects and activities sponsored by our partners are automatically approved for volunteer hours credit provided they are not specifically forbidden by our state organization. Projects and activities for credit are limited to Texas. Consult the Volunteer Project and Activity Lists available on the TMN-COT web site for examples of approved/unapproved activities for specific partners.

Citizen science projects initiated by a partner as either a one-time event or requiring on-going data collection are covered under the umbrella of partner activities. No additional approval is required to volunteer and report hours for such activities.

2. Volunteering with Other Nature Organizations

There are many nature-related volunteer activities available in Brazoria and adjacent counties. TMN-COT does not maintain a partnership agreement with all of them, but many of their activities count for volunteer service hours. A Volunteer Project and Activity Request Form (VPAR) must be filled out for any projects and activities conducted with a non-partner. The VPAR must be submitted to the Board for approval before volunteer service hours may be submitted. The Board will review and verify that the planned activities fall within the mission of the Texas Master Naturalists.

Citizen science projects initiated by an approved organization as either a one-time event or requiring on-going data collection are covered as stated in the VPAR. No additional approval is required to volunteer and report hours for such activities. Examples of such activities are the Texas Stream Team Water Quality Monitoring and Audubon Christmas Bird Counts.

3. Other Citizen Science Projects

An important aspect of field observation is reporting with data or with data and photographs to on-line data repositories of survey data. Examples include e-Bird, iNaturalist, BAMONA, Lost Ladybug, etc. In most cases, the member accumulates data and photos while pursuing other volunteer or outdoor activities. Generally, only the time that is required to report the data and upload the photos may be counted as volunteer service hours. The Board has decided to limit this time to actual time spent reporting the observation or a maximum of 15 minutes per observation (for iNaturalist, one observation may represent more than one photo of a species being submitted). If the member is initiating a self-directed survey of an area, the Volunteer Projects Director may approve the actual survey time in addition to the data/photo reporting time. All citizen science projects **MUST HAVE** a data reporting element to a nature organization.

The chapter may also approve citizen science projects initiated by members as long as the goal is consistent with the Texas Master Naturalist mission. An example is the Big Tree Registry project. Time reporting for such projects is outlined in the VPAR and associated activity list. Again, a reporting element is required.

4. Citizen Science Projects Conducted Entirely at Home

The state TMN organization suggests that volunteer-credited, home citizen-science projects must include a component of data reporting to a national database where the information is published or open to the public for study. Examples include Project Feeder Watch and the Great Backyard Bird Count from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Because at-home projects include limited or no involvement of others, the state TMN suggests that credit for volunteer hours on these projects be limited.

In accordance with this, the COT Board limits credit for home citizen science projects conducted entirely at home to two hours per week per home citizen science project. This time should not include any time that would normally be considered home maintenance activities, even though they may benefit wildlife, for example, maintaining feeders, ponds, drips, etc. Any variance to this rule may be appealed to the Board.

5. Animal Rehab Done at Home

Because at-home animal rehab includes limited or no involvement of others, the state TMN suggests that credit for volunteer hours on this activity be limited. The COT Board limits at-home animal rehab to three hours per week. Any variance to this rule may be appealed to the Board. All animal rehab volunteer work must be reported under the “Other: Animal Rehab” opportunity code.

6. Outside Board Activities

The state TMN has ruled that participation on a partner Board as a representative of TMN-COT is allowed and may be reported as volunteer service. However, when chapter members serve in an officer position of another nature organization (e.g., President, Secretary, Treasurer), many of their activities are administrative in nature and not related to specific nature projects or activities. The outside Board administrative activities may be reported for service hours but should be coded under the “Other” opportunity.

7. Volunteer Service Hours Not Approved

Some examples of volunteer opportunities that are not approved for Master Naturalist hours are listed below:

- Gift shop operation
- Acting solely as a greeter such as counting the number of people who come to an event/or through a Visitor Center door. (Visitor center docents whose volunteer duties include educating the public about natural resource ecology, biology, and management may be approved for Master Naturalist hours)
- Any project required by the terms of your employment or for which you are compensated

- Hours reported to another organization, which would result in double counting at the state level, such as working as a volunteer at the Sea Center and submitting those hours to both the Sea Center and TMN program. Report those hours to ONLY ONE organization.

8. Travel

Travel time may be added to volunteer service time but is subject to the limits as noted below.

- Travel time MAY NOT be added to advanced training time or to initial training time hours that are reported.
- Travel time reported per event MAY NOT exceed the service time for the event.
 - Example 1: The chapter allows 1.0 hour volunteer service time for attending a chapter meeting. If travel time is 45 minutes each way, total time that may be reported is 1.0 hour for the service and 1.0 hour for the travel, for a total of 2 hours.
 - Example 2: Attending a chapter-sponsored event at which the volunteer service time is 4 hours. If travel time 45 minute each way, the total time that may be reported is 4 hours for the service and 1.5 hours for the travel, for a total of 5.5 hours.
- Travel that is part of a Christmas Bird Count event is always counted with the total time for the event. For Christmas Bird Counts, count all time from home starting point until returning home. Social dining time must be excluded, but meals at the end of each event associated with data gathering and reporting may also be included.
- There are other events that may require travel. For example, volunteering for events at two different libraries on the same day for the Summer Library Program: Time to travel from site 1 to site 2 may also be included in total report time.
- Travel that is part of pick-up and delivery of an injured animal on behalf of Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue or related organization may all be included in report time, i.e., time from door to door should be counted. Similarly, the time required to pick up and deliver an injured sea turtle to Padre Island (or intermediate spot), may also be reported.

Appendix 2

Additional New Member Training Guidelines

The Texas Master Naturalist—Cradle of Texas Chapter (TMN-COT) offers new-member training at least annually. The requirements for graduation for the new member (intern) training class are outlined in the *Chapter Management and Operations Protocols*, Article IV Requirements Section. Some additional guidelines are outlined below for TMN-COT. The list may not be all-inclusive. All questions should be directed to the TMN-COT New Class Director or Board of Directors.

1. Interns must attend a minimum of 10 sessions of the Cradle of Texas annual intern training program and the combined classroom and field experience must total a minimum of 40 hours.
2. If only eight or nine of the required 10 sessions are attended, make-up of as many as two missed intern training sessions is permitted. Subject to the approval by the New Class Director and/or approval by the Board, make up is limited to:
 - a. Attendance at an intern training session(s) at another TMN chapter. These make-up training sessions must not have the same content as an intern training session attended for the Cradle of Texas chapter
 - b. Attendance at the missed session in a future intern course given by Cradle of Texas chapter
 - c. Four (4) equivalent training hours at a pre-approved Advanced Training session covering the missed topics. These sessions may be one, 4-hour topic session or two, 2-hour topic sessions. Pre-approval by New Class Director and Advanced Training Director is required. Approved 2-hour topic sessions may be on varying subject matter
 - d. Extra session topics may be offered in each annual intern training class. The extra session(s) can be used as a make-up.
3. Interns have a maximum of 15 months from the start of their intern training classes to complete the above requirements. For example, if they began their classes in September of 2019, then certification must be completed by December 2020.
4. Exceptions to these guidelines will be handled by the Board of Directors on a case by case basis.
5. If an intern is unable to continue with the training classes, the intern will be given the opportunity to return next year to complete the training at no extra charge and the trainee will keep the training material.
6. The first priority of training classes shall be the certification of new members. Maximum class size and guest attendance shall be determined by the New Class Director with Board of Director approval.

Appendix 3

Additional Guidelines for Chapter Financial Management

The requirements for management of chapter finances are outlined in the COH (Chapter Operating Handbook) under duties of the Treasurer. Some additional guidelines are outlined below for TMN-COT. All questions concerning management of chapter finances should be directed to the Chapter Treasurer or the TMN-COT Board of Directors.

1. Expenditures

All expenditures approved must conform with the purpose of the Chapter as outlined in the Chapter By-laws.

2. Budgeted Expenses-

The Treasurer is authorized to pay any expenditure outlined in the board approved budget.

3. Non-budgeted Expenses

- a. The Treasurer must authorize the payment of any non-budgeted expenditure less than or equal to \$100.
- b. The Board of Directors must approve any non-budgeted expenditure of more than \$100.

4. Chapter Charge Card

The chapter charge card may be used by the Chapter Host or Treasurer to purchase supplies for training classes, meeting events, or other approved expenditures under the dollar limits outlined under the budgeted/non-budgeted expense guidelines above.

5. Tax for 501(c)(3) Organizations

If possible, the Chapter 501(c)(3) form should be presented when payment is made for chapter expenses so that taxes do not have to be paid.

6. Mileage Reimbursement

All Board authorized mileage reimbursement is done at the current IRS business travel rate.

7. Reimbursement for Speaker Travel

In general, speakers represent partner organizations or related nature organizations in the area. As such, no reimbursement for speaker mileage or travel expenses is made. Likewise, speakers who are paid employees whose costs are already covered by their employer may not be additionally reimbursed. Upon request, speakers from non-partner organizations who travel from outside of Brazoria County are reimbursed under the following guidelines.

- a. Mileage: Speaker mileage is reimbursed at the current IRS business reimbursement rate.
- b. Hotel/Food: In general, no hotel/food reimbursement is provided to speakers. With prior Board approval, one night of overnight stay at a local motel and a maximum of \$50 per diem for food is paid for a speaker with exceptional travel needs.
- c. No speaker honorariums are paid.

8. Reimbursement for State Meeting

Some or all of the costs to attend the state meeting are approved under the following guidelines.

- a. The Chapter will sponsor two Board members (President and State Rep or designated alternates) to attend the State TMN meeting. The Board members will be reimbursed for registration, lodging, and mileage. Mileage is reimbursed at the current IRS business rate.
- b. In addition, members who support the state meeting in an official capacity with significant volunteer efforts, such as transport of photo easels, will be reimbursed for mileage expenses only. Mileage is reimbursed at the current IRS business rate. Pre-approval of mileage reimbursement is recommended.