

Idaho Master Naturalist Program Chapter Chartering Guidelines



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Process for Establishing an Idaho Master Naturalist Chapter

PHASE 1

Interested person (s) contact local representatives of natural resource agencies or Program Coordinator about starting a Master Naturalist chapter. They form a Local Coordinating Committee that includes an advisor (local representative of a natural resource agency) and at least 3 petitioning new members. Local Coordinating Committee submits petition to State Steering Committee with:

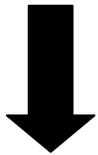
Volunteer enrollment forms for all Local Coordinating Committee members

Letter and volunteer enrollment form from one local representative of a natural resource agency/organization agreeing to support the chapter and serve as the advisor.

Chosen name for the chapter and community in which the chapter will be based

List of partners and statement about the need for a chapter in that community

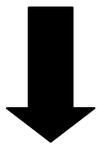
Agreement of at least 2 members and the chapter advisor to attend the coordinators' training



Steering Committee reviews petition and notifies petitioning chapter of approval. Local Coordinating Committee members attend free training.

Phase 2

Petitioning chapter submits syllabus for training workshop and preliminary list of possible service projects by _____ for review and approval by State Steering Committee.



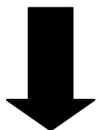
Steering Committee reviews syllabus and approves or makes recommendations for changes.

Phase 3

Petitioning chapter trains a minimum of 10 members.

Petitioning chapter establishes local by-laws and elects a slate of officers

Petitioning chapter provides State Corrdinator with mailing addresses, names, contact information, and position of all chapter officers, committee chairs, and advisors.



State Coordinator reviews materials and makes recommendations to Steering Committee. Steering Committee approves or makes recommendations for changes

Petitioning Chapter receives Chapter Charter Certificate

Chapter Chartering Process: Phase I Initiating Chapter Development

As the Idaho Master Naturalist program grows, new chapters will be added each year in new communities. The locations for these chapters depend on several factors:

- (1) a demonstrated need for volunteers in the community to conduct service related to conservation and management of natural resources,
- (2) interest from community members in participating in the program,
- (3) willingness of some community members to serve on a Local Coordinating Committee to do the groundwork to build the chapter, and

(4) interest from potential partner organizations in supporting the chapter in the community. Completing the first phase of the chapter chartering process demonstrates that these needs and interests exist in the community. Below are descriptions of each item needed for this phase of the process.

Local Coordinating Committee

For this first phase of the process, you will need to assemble a minimum of 3 people to form a *Local Coordinating Committee*. In most cases, these individuals will be volunteers, but also may be staff members of IDFG or a local partner. The task of this initial local coordinating committee is to guide the chapter through its beginning stages. The responsibilities include identifying a chapter advisor (see next section), identifying and talking with potential local partners, setting the ground rules and bylaws for the chapter, recruiting participants, planning and organizing the first volunteer training course, planning and organizing service opportunities for the first volunteers, and keeping the initial records of participation and activities. This is a significant list of responsibilities, and coordinating committee members should be enthusiastic about the program and have the time and energy to make it happen. A complete job description for the Chapter Coordinating Committee is included in Appendix I. The state Steering Committee and the Program Coordinator will provide assistance to help you succeed.

If Coordinating Committee members are volunteers who would also like to be participants in the IMNP (work toward IMN certification) they are allowed to apply chapter start-up work toward their 40 hours of service.

Deadline: The list of Local Coordinating Committee members and volunteer enrollment forms for each member are **due** _____ for chapters that will start in _____. The state Steering Committee will review the list to ensure that the potential new chapter has sufficient volunteers to coordinate the chapter in its beginning stage.

Chapter Advisor

The local coordinating committee should identify an advisor for the chapter and obtain and submit a letter of support from him or her. The advisor should be a local representative of a natural resource agency or organization, such as but not limited to Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Parks and Recreation, US Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, BLM, Idaho Department of Lands, or University of Idaho Extension. The advisor's role is described in Appendix II. In addition, Chapter Advisors are expected to attend New Chapter Coordinators' training along with the two selected committee members. The Chapter Advisor becomes the 4th member of the Local Coordinating Committee. Please contact the Program Coordinator if you are having difficulty finding an appropriate advisor.

Deadline: A letter of support and a volunteer enrollment form from a Chapter Advisor is due. _____ for chapters that will starting _____.

Community Support and Partners

The local coordinating committee and the Chapter Advisor should work together to describe the need for natural resource volunteers in the community and why they think the community is a good location for a Idaho Master Naturalist chapter. Local parks, land conservancies, environmental education centers, and citizen monitoring groups are all potential local partners that could help provide volunteer projects and trainings. Now is a good time to establish communication with these partners and involve them in the process. Choosing how your chapter will be organized (see page 8 of the program overview for different ways a chapter can be organized) needs to be identified early, in order to contact the appropriate potential partners.

Deadline: A list of potential partners for the chapter and a description of why that community has a need for a Master Naturalist chapter are due _____ for chapters that will start in _____. In addition, a clearly defined description of the chapter organization (is due at this time, as well. This information may be included in the letter of support from the Chapter Advisor.

Chapter Name and Location

The Local Coordinating Committee and Chapter Advisor should choose a name for the chapter. Ideally, the name should be locally relevant and have the potential to be long-lasting. The name may be geographical, natural history-based, or descriptive of the community in which the chapter is based. The name should continue to be appropriate over time, regardless of whether new chapters form in nearby communities. Names that refer to expansive geographic regions that might include many chapters in the future are not as good choices.

The Local Coordinating Committee and Chapter Advisor also should identify the community in which the chapter will be based. This community may be a town, city, county, or other geographic area, such as a local watershed. The community will be the locality in which most trainings and meetings are held and will be the focal area for service projects. Identifying this locality does not prevent a chapter from accepting members from nearby localities or from assisting those members in finding service projects in their communities. Rather, this identification emphasizes the community-based nature of the program and communicates to interested citizens where the trainings and meetings are likely to be held.

Deadline: A statement describing the name of the chapter and the community in which it will be based is _____ for chapters that will start in _____. This information may be included in the letter of support from the Chapter Advisor.

All materials should be sent to:

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Sara Focht, Idaho Master Naturalist Program Coordinator
P.O. Box 25 Boise, ID 83707
E-mail: sfocht@idfg.idaho.gov

Note: The list of Local Coordinating Committee members, the Chapter Advisor letter of support, the description of potential partners and community support, and the chapter name and location may all be sent via e-mail. Hard copies of the volunteer enrollment forms should be mailed, as they are signed documents.

Chapter Chartering Process: Phase 2 Developing a Syllabus, Project Proposals, and By-laws

The second phase of the chapter chartering process requires some significant work by the local coordinating committee. However, completing these elements by their respective deadlines will help the chapter run much more smoothly over the next 6-12 months. The Program Coordinator and Steering Committee are here to assist you in completing these tasks and to help ensure some consistency among chapters while still allowing for local control. We are not here to be overly judgmental. Remember, we want you to succeed!

Suggested Timeline for New Chapters: From Phase I Approval to Chapter Chartering

This timeline is written for chapters attending the New Chapter Coordinators' Training in _____ and holding the Basic Training Course _____. Chapters planning to hold their training courses earlier or later should adjust the timeline accordingly.

Month 1, 2, 3

- Chapter representatives attend the New Chapter Coordinators' Training and de-brief the rest of the Local Coordinating Committee
- Establish communication system for the Local Coordinating Committee, if needed
- Establish temporary sub-committees or leadership as needed (Training Committee/Lead, Service Project Committee/Lead, Membership Committee/Lead at minimum)
- Decide how the chapter will be organized and what tracks will be provided (see page 6 of The Idaho Master Naturalist Program Overview for organization ideas and page 5 for track descriptions)
- Set general outline for Basic Training Course
- Establish relationships with partner organizations
- Send Program Coordinator general information about the chapter to post on the IMN Web site

Month 4, 5, 6

- Plan details of Basic Training Course-classroom and field trip locations, class dates and times
- Set draft syllabus and guest instructor list
- Establish budget and determine course fee
- Set up bank account and financial processes
- Establish recruitment, application, and screening processes
- Work with partner organizations to identify volunteer needs and develop project proposals

By _____ (approximately 10 weeks before the course starts), send Program Coordinator all Phase II materials (see Chapter Chartering Guidelines). The Steering Committee will review these materials and notify chapters of any suggested changes by _____

Month 6, 7, 8

- Finalize course syllabus and details
- Application deadline, review applications and notify applicants of acceptance
- Collect course fees
- Notify wait-listed individuals as needed and establish final course roster
- Compile readings, handouts, and other course materials
- Begin preparing evaluation and assessment process and materials
- Send out confirmation letters to guest instructors
- Set up communication system for course participants
- Set up record keeping system
- Continue working with partner organizations to identify volunteer needs and develop project proposals

Months 9, 10, 11, 12

- Conduct Basic Training Course
- Identify volunteers to assist with hospitality for course (snacks, room set-up, etc.)
- Administer pre-program evaluation
- Evaluate guest instructors and overall training course
- Send “thank yous” to guest instructors
- Conduct graduation; prepare and distribute course completion certificates
- Elect Board of Directors and officers
- Establish committees
- Establish by-laws
- Continue working with partner organizations to identify volunteer needs and develop project proposals
- Work with course participants to match them to approved service projects
- Establish and communicate plans for continued interaction with chapter members (regular chapter meetings, listserv or on-line group, etc.)

Month 12

- Make sure that all membership and service project records are up-to-date
- Order nametags and certificates for any individuals who have completed all requirements for Master Naturalist certification
- De-brief and evaluate the training and other aspects of the local chapter among the Chapter Coordinating Committee and Board of Directors; begin planning for the next training course

When the course has completed, send Program Coordinator all Phase III materials. The Program Coordinator will distribute chapter charter certificates.

Syllabus and Course Information

Purpose: The basic training course is one of the first big responsibilities for the chapter. It will set the tone and expectations for the new chapter members. Although chapters will differ in their approach to the training, some consistency statewide will help ensure that all Idaho Master Naturalists have a basic set of skills and knowledge to bring to their volunteer service.

Deadline: The syllabus and other information for your chapter's first training course should be submitted approximately **10 weeks prior to the start of the course, by the date specified by the State Program Coordinator.**

Criteria: The Steering Committee will be reviewing the syllabi to make sure that the core curriculum topics are covered. Will the trainees finish the course with the basic knowledge and skills that are a part of being a Idaho Master Naturalist? We will also be checking that at least 25% of the course time is spent in the field. Finally, we will be looking to see that the chapter has appropriate instructors for each topic. If you are having difficulties locating an instructor for a particular topic, please let us know and we will help you contact someone in your area.

Format: Please include the meeting dates and times for the course, the amount of the course fee with a short justification for that fee, and the process by which people may apply to take the course and join the chapter. If you have adapted the volunteer enrollment form for this purpose or created another questionnaire, please include it. List the topics that will be covered each session and the instructors who will be teaching those topics. Include locations and topics for field trips. If you will have some on-going activities, such as reporting nature observations or field journaling, please describe those activities as well. We understand that this is a draft syllabus and that some things may change during the course.

Project Proposals

Purpose: It is important to demonstrate that there is an established need for Idaho Master Naturalist volunteers in your community. Some participants will want to start their volunteer hours soon after starting the training course, so it will help the chapter to have some projects already in place. Also, knowing the volunteer needs of the community will assist chapters when screening and selecting participants for the training course.

Deadline: Potential volunteer project information is due at the same time as the course syllabus, **10 weeks prior to the start of the course, by the date specified by the State Program Coordinator.**

Format: If your chapter has developed your own project proposal form, please include copies of that form filled out for each potential project.

Criteria: There is no requirement for the number of projects, but you should keep in mind the range of interests and abilities the volunteers will have. The Steering Committee will be looking for projects that fit the program's mission. It will not be necessary for chapters to submit all proposals for future projects to the Steering Committee, but we would like to see some examples so that we may help any chapters that are unsure of appropriate projects and partners.

Our state parks, wildlife management areas, natural area preserves, and forests are all in need of volunteers for projects ranging from trail building and maintenance to environmental education and interpretive programming to monitoring and species inventories. Please keep these possibilities in mind as you are planning projects.

Web Site Information

Purpose: We would like to help you publicize your chapter and to provide information to the many people who contact us to find out about where and when trainings will be held. The Idaho Master Naturalist Web has not been created, but is viewed as an important resource for communication among all people involved in the IMNP

Deadlines: When the website is up, please respond to requests for chapter information quickly, so we can help you publicize and communicate with chapter members.

Website features planned are:

What is an Idaho Master Naturalist?

Program overview

Volunteer and Instructor Resources

[Track your hours](#)
[Look for advanced training opportunities](#)
[Review a Booklist for naturalists](#)
[Weblinks](#)
[Upload your photos](#)
[Curriculum feedback](#)

Instructor Resources

[Lesson plans](#)
[Field Trip ideas](#)
[Evaluations](#)
[Curriculum feedback](#)

Current Chapters

How do I join?

Bring a Chapter to your region

Chapter Chartering Process: Step 3 Completing the Process

After approval of the items submitted for Phase II, the chapter is ready to hold its first training. A minimum of 10 people must graduate from the training for the chapter to receive its charter. Near the end of the training, the chapter should establish by-laws and elect officers according to the by-laws and Operating Handbook. At this point, the role of the Local Coordinating Committee ends and the newly elected Board of Directors takes over leadership of the chapter.

By-laws and Operating Handbook

Purpose: The by-laws are the rules under which your chapter operates. **The Operating Handbook** details the roles of chapter officers, committees, and Board members. In order to ensure that chapters are operating fairly and effectively, it is important to have some consistency among chapters while still allowing chapters to make their own decisions about dues, meetings, and the like.

Deadline: The deadline for sending in the chapter by-laws is **within one month of the completion of the training course**. Chapters may prefer to establish the by-laws part-way through the training course so that the by-laws procedures can be followed when holding elections.

Criteria: There is a template for the by-laws on the Web site that indicates the decisions that need to be made. The decisions include how much the when and how often the chapter membership will meet, when and how often the chapter's Board of Directors will meet, and any limitations the chapter will have on the number of administrative hours that may count towards the required 40 hours of service. The by-laws also states when dues must be paid by chapter members, so you should make decisions about how much dues will be.

A template for the Operating Handbook is also available on the Web site. Chapters should tailor this document as needed to reflect the job descriptions for the officers, committee chairs, and other Board members.

Format: You may send the chapter by-laws as a MS Word or PDF, following the template provided on the Web. Be sure to update the date in the footer to indicate when your chapter coordinating committee approved the by-laws.

Board of Directors

Purpose: The Board of Directors takes over the governance of the chapter when the Local Coordinating Committee's job is complete. The Board should be elected by the chapter. The Board should include officers, committee chairs, and other members as specified in the Chapter Operating Handbook.

After training is complete the participants elected to the Board may apply time spent with chapter administrative work up to but not exceeding 25 volunteer hours per year toward their 40 hours of certification.

Deadline: The deadline for sending in the Board of Directors information is **within one month of the completion of the training course.**

Criteria: The Program Coordinator needs the names, roles (e.g. officers, committee chairs, etc.), and complete contact information for all Board members.

Guidelines for the Rescission of Chapters

There are several scenarios under which a chapter can be dissolved or revoked. (1) A chapter may, for untold reasons, lose the interest of its members. (2) None or only a few members are meeting the annual requirements. This type of chapter is not meeting the goals and objectives of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program. (3) A chapter charter may also be revoked if that chapter does not comply with Idaho Master Naturalist Program policies or overtly contravenes the guidelines and policies. For the overall health and welfare of the program these issues must be addressed and resolved.

Rescission Process

1. A chapter may self-dissolve by a 2/3 vote of its legitimate active members present and voting at a regular chapter meeting or special meeting where all members have been appropriately notified. A letter must be submitted to the State Committee stating the results of the vote and why the chapter chooses to dissolve.
2. If a chapter fails to comply with guidelines and policies as set forth by the State Steering Committee, then a letter of warning will be issued. The chapter will have six months from the date of the warning letter to amend its actions and begin complying with guidelines and policies. If the chapter does not conform at the end of the six-month probation period then its charter shall be revoked.
3. The Idaho Master Naturalist Executive Committee reserves the right to revoke the charter of any chapter that overtly contravenes the Program's guidelines and policies.

Chapter Records and Assets

When a chapter is dissolved, its records should be transferred to the State Steering Committee. The disposition of any remaining assets (funds, items of value, or property) will be determined either by the chapter's legal documents or by the State Steering Committee.

Appendix I: Local Coordinating Committee Job Description

Place of Work: Home and meeting locations in the community as determined by the Local Coordinating Committee.

Goal: The Local Coordinating Committee builds the chapter and guides it through its beginning stages to complete requirements for chartering. The committee plans and conducts the first basic volunteer training course for the chapter and works with partner organizations to develop volunteer service projects.

Qualifications: Local Coordinating Committee members should have enthusiasm about the Idaho Master Naturalist program and a strong desire to see the program succeed in their community. They should possess good organizational and communication skills. Some knowledge of natural resources and of potential partners and partner organizations in the community is helpful.

Duties: As a committee and with help from the Chapter Advisor, determine the chapter's name and the community in which it will be based. Plan the first training course by developing a syllabus and reading list, scheduling instructors, and determining logistics such as a location for the course. Develop an initial set of volunteer service projects by working with partner organizations in the community, such as parks, schools, non-profits, and state agencies. Develop and execute procedures for recruiting and communicating with chapter members. Keep the chapter's initial records on chapter members, training hours, and volunteer hours. Handle course fees and chapter funds using standard bookkeeping practices. These duties may be divided among the Local Coordinating Committee members. Two Local Coordinating Committee members must attend the New Chapter Coordinators Training presented by the statewide Steering Committee. The state Steering Committee and the state Program Coordinator will provide resources such as sample syllabi, potential readings, and ideas for service projects.

Time Required: The Local Coordinating Committee's responsibilities begin when the committee is formed and end when the chapter has completed its first volunteer training course and elected a Board of Directors to continue the leadership of the chapter. This process generally lasts 9 to 15 months. After that time, some Local Coordinating Committee members may choose to run for and participate in the chapter's Board of Directors.

Benefits: The Local Coordinating Committee leads the effort to establish the Idaho Master Naturalist program in a new community and has the opportunity to set the tone and direction of that chapter. Committee members develop leadership, management, and communication skills. They network with staff of state agencies and partner organizations involved in the conservation and management of natural resources in the community. When a chapter has more qualified applicants for a training course than available spaces, Local Coordinating Committee members receive high priority for that training, as they are deeply involved in growing the chapter.

Supporting Resources: The Chapter Advisor will assist the Local Coordinating Committee in its tasks and decision making. The state Steering Committee will provide in-depth training on

the program and how to coordinate a chapter for two committee members, who can then share what they have learned with the rest of the committee. Written resources, including the Idaho Master Naturalist Program Volunteer Policy Handbook is available.

Impact and Reporting Procedures: The Local Coordinating Committee is responsible for regularly communicating with the state Program Coordinator to ensure the chapter development process is going smoothly and according to program and agency policies. The committee must meet several important deadlines over the course of the chapter's development. These include (1) submitting for review by the Steering Committee the Local Coordinating Committee roster and volunteer enrollment forms, the chapter name, and the chapter's base location, (2) submitting for review by the Steering Committee a draft syllabus and other details regarding the training course, plans for volunteer service projects, and chapter by-laws, and (3) submitting records showing the completion of the first training course and contact information for elected Board of Directors so that the chapter may receive its charter.

The committee also must keep records on chapter membership, attendance, and service hours and be able to report that information when requested by the Program Coordinator.

Advisor/Supervisor: The Chapter Advisor advises the Local Coordinating Committee. The Program Coordinator and Steering Committee provide additional support and supervision.

Appendix II: Chapter Advisor Guidelines

The Advisor's role is as follows:

1. Attend initial Local Chapter Coordinators' training along with other designated members of Local Coordinating Committee.
2. Give advice, make recommendations, inform and notify the chapter on appropriate business in a professional way.
3. The advisor should not be the manager of the chapter business or activities. However, as an ex-officio member of the chapter's Board of Directors, the advisor is expected to attend all scheduled Board meetings and provide counsel and advice when needed. He or she is to be a chapter supporter and available to advise, recommend, inform and notify the chapter and/or its members on and of appropriate and professional matters.
4. Be familiar with the goals, activities and mission of the organization and local Chapter.
5. Be willing to meet with the officers of the organization to discuss expectations of their roles and responsibilities.
6. Assist the organization in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision, and operational framework set forth by the organizers of the chapter as well as assist in further developing realistic goals with the chapter's Board of Directors that are within the parameters of the statewide Idaho Master Naturalist program.
7. Facilitate opportunities for Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgment within proper measure of autonomy when coordinating chapter events and activities. In keeping with this approach, advisors should participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process.
8. Be aware of the chapter's financial status via review of financial statements and approval of expenditures.
9. Be aware of the Idaho Master Naturalist State policies and guidelines and other agency or organization guidelines that establish expectations for volunteer requirements, behavior and activities. Ensure that the group and its officers know where these policies and guidelines are published, what rules are, why they exist, and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters. You are expected to report violations or potential violations to the State Program Coordinator.
10. The advisor should be ready to assist the Master Naturalist State Program and State Steering Committee as needed as they may be called upon to implement regulations or policies from time to time.

11. The advisor is responsible for notifying the chapter officers and the State Steering Committee regarding chapter concerns. The chapter officers are responsible for notifying the State Program Coordinator regarding advisor problems or concerns.

The Chapter-Advisor(s) 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.