

CHAPTER GOVERNANCE: Leadership Development

Building a Leadership Pipeline

Disengaged, discouraged, exhausted. These are just a few of the adjectives that might describe a chapter officer whose shelf life has expired. Serving on your board should not be a life sentence! Chapter leaders wouldn't have to experience complete burnout if they had a chapter leadership pipeline in place.

One cannot expect new chapter leaders to materialize miraculously year after year. Chapter boards need a method to identify and prepare members to serve in leadership positions. Without a leadership pipeline, officers end up being recycled. Mediocre leadership leads to inertia that supports little or no leadership at all.

1. Build a Bigger Leadership Pool

Building a chapter leadership pipeline is a proactive initiative. Chapter leaders past and present must constantly search for and develop their immediate and future successors. A successful chapter leadership pipeline draws members from a pool of volunteers and places them into leadership positions such as chapter officers and committee chairs. In order to build your leadership pipeline, you first must fill up your pool of volunteers.

- ✓ Create a dedicated page on your chapter website that describes *micro-volunteering* opportunities of all kinds. Describe any open leadership positions. Include this information in newsletters, social media, and on the website. Members are less likely to commit to something if they don't really know what they're in for. Make leadership and volunteering more transparent and accessible to all members, especially those who are not "in the loop."
- ✓ Include testimonials from volunteers and chapter leaders about their experience and the impact it had on their lives.
- ✓ Explain how the chapter is governed, how long are the terms of the officer positions and extend an invitation to attend an upcoming board meeting.

2. Rethink and Redefine Chapter Leadership Positions

Your leadership tree must be flexible enough to welcome a diverse group of qualified members. A chapter leadership pipeline will ensure you always have people accessible who can climb onto the next branch of the tree. If you have trouble finding and keeping volunteer leaders, it may have something to do with the current job description. Today's members aren't always as willing (or able) to dedicate as much time to their association as they have in the past.

Do your leadership positions demand too much of a member's time? You want leaders who can delegate tasks and provide opportunities to collaborate with others, not doers.

- ✓ Talk to current and past leaders about responsibilities that could be shared or delegated to another position.
- ✓ Find out what type of support would have made their leadership job easier.

This may lead you to creating an entirely new group of volunteers, such as a *Past Dean's Circle* who agree to be on call to temporarily assist leaders.

3. Clearly Articulate the Job and Responsibilities

- ✓ Make sure each chapter leadership position has an updated, complete position description. *Each officer description is located in the Leadership Toolkits on the AGO website.* <https://www.agohq.org/chapter-leadership-toolkits/>.
- ✓ Define responsibilities and set expectations, including the time commitment.
- ✓ Describe the skills or experience required.
- ✓ It's important to define the benefits of volunteering for a particular position.
- ✓ Utilize the *Values and Benefits of Serving as a Chapter Leader* document that is located in the Board Management and Governance Toolkit on the AGO website: <https://www.agohq.org/chapter-leadership-toolkits/>.

Review position descriptions annually. The skills that served your leadership in the past may not be the same set of skills required for the future.

4. Discover Hidden Leaders

During the new member onboarding and member renewal process, find out if members are or have been leaders for other organizations, such as youth groups, church, sports, or other community groups. Someone whose schedule is heavily committed to another organization may not have time for yours right now, but keep their name in the leadership pool for the future.

- ✓ Talk to past board members, current officers and committee members about who they could recommend for leadership or committee positions.
- ✓ Find out who's highly trusted in the member community by asking members who they respect.
 - Whom do they go to for advice?
 - Whose opinion do they value?
 - Whom would they trust with the leadership of their chapter?
- ✓ When you approach members about taking on a leadership role, emphasize the endorsements they received from their peers. This might encourage them to serve.

5. Send Out Leadership Scouts

College and professional sports teams have scouts and so do leadership teams. The leadership scout's job is to identify members who could be good prospects for *micro-volunteering* or

serving on a committees. Assign this role to a member who loves to talk with other members, or has a wide professional network.

Even if the members they identify feel that they are not yet qualified to serve on your board service, invite them to serve as part of an advisory group or task force.

6. Participate in the AGO Chapter Leadership Training Program

- ✓ Your district convener is here to support you.
- ✓ Encourage everyone in a leadership position to utilize the Chapter Leadership Toolkits on the AGO website. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.
- ✓ Participate in the live or on-demand webinars and videos that the AGO has produced.
- ✓ Read each issue of the Chapter Leadership Newsletter for best practices.
- ✓ Initiate a buddy or mentor program. Your *Past Dean's Circle* can be a great resource for this.

Think about the legacy you will leave and the impact you can have on your chapter by supporting others to serve in leadership roles.

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

Mahatma Gandhi