**Accountability**

**[](https://sites.google.com/a/sierraclub.org/performance-hub/accountability/handstogether.jpg?attredirects=0)**

**Context**

Sometimes things don't work out. When a volunteer engages in a pattern of toxic behavior, or is unable to turn their performance around, it is often most easy to ignore the problem, or to assume it's someone else's responsibility, or to say to ourselves "we have to accept this, after all, they are a volunteer."   
  
Unfortunately, poor performance is contagious. A leader who bullies others, or a team lead who doesn't demonstrate solid skills, most often winds up pushing others away and modeling poor behavior for those who remain. How do you avoid losing the good volunteers in an environment like this?

Also, Sierra Club standing rules require that leaders take action when there is a violation of our Affirmative Standards of Conduct, or in the instance of Misconduct. We each share responsibility for the success of one another and our shared work.

**To Whom am I Accountable?**

The chart below is intended as a guide for thinking about where accountability lies for a majority of volunteer leaders in the Sierra Club. Everyone with a role in the left column bears responsibility for the performance of the individual roles and entities on the right. That's a big job, but as we seek to build a movement broad and strong enough to win on the critical issues we face in the world today, our role as leaders is grounded in our effort to cultivate strong and effective volunteers!

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| **Responsible Person or Entity** | **Holds Which Individuals or Entity Accountable** |
| Board of Directors (BoD) | Individual Board Members, BoD Committees |
| BoD, or BoD Executive Committee, in consultation with Office of Chapter Support | Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) |
| Office of Chapter Support, in consultation with other entities as appropriate | Chapter ExCom Chair |
| Chapter ExCom Chair | Chapter ExCom Members, Conservation and Administrative Leaders |
| Chapter ExCom | Group ExCom Chair, Group ExCom |
| Group ExCom Chair | Group ExCom Members, Conservation and Administrative Leaders |
| Chapter or Group ExCom | Chapter or Group Conservation and Administrative Committee Chairs |
| Local Committee/Activity Section Chair | Local Committee/Activity Section Members |
| Office of Outdoor Activities | Chapter and Group Outings Chairs |
| Chapter Outings Chair, in consultation with Outings Committee and Chapter Chair | Chapter Outings Leaders |
| Group Outings Chair in consultation with Outings Commitee and Group Chair | Group Outings Leaders |
| Grassroots Network Pair | Grassroots Network team leads |
| National Campaign/Program Pair | National Campaign/Program Team Leads |
| National Campaign/Program Team | National Campaign/Program Team Members |
| Individual Volunteers | Selves |

**What Does Accountability Look Like?**

The chart below illustrates what accountability can look like across a range of unmet expectations. This isn't meant to be comprehensive, but is a starting point for thinking creatively about how to hold people accountable in ways that are effective. Remember that a Chair at the local level has the authority to remove a disruptive individual from meetings, events, outings.

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| **Unmet Expectation** | **Potential Corrective Measures** |
| Has not fulfilled responsibilities of role or completed agreed upon assignment(s). | * Require specific training, coaching, or action on the part of a volunteer in order to continue serving in a leadership role. * Be specific about what needs to be demonstrated and by when. * Reassess and modify responsibilities for role, if feasible * Remove from role if expectation is still not met after corrective training and coaching. |
| Does not follow agreed upon Norms, Working Agreements, or processes. | * Bring infraction to attention of person who broke the Norm(s), Working Agreement(s) or did not follow agreed upon process(es). * Provide verbal reminder. * Document with written reminder and warn of consequences for inability to come into compliance by time and date certain. |
| Individual non­inclusive and/or toxic behavior | * Require specific training, coaching, or action to help individual stop the bad practice. |
| Exhibits repeated non­inclusive, toxic, disruptive behavior and inability to follow agreed upon Norms or Working Agreements. | * Prohibit attendance at Sierra Club meetings or events, or entrance to Sierra Club offices. * Removal from role, suspension or termination of leadership privileges. |
| Engages in harassment, bullying, microaggressions, threats or other behavior that cause others to feel unsafe. | * Prohibit interaction with specific Sierra Club volunteer leaders. * Removal from role, suspension or termination of leadership privileges |
| Does not follow Sierra Club List Policy | * Suspend for a period of time or revoke posting privileges on Sierra Club email lists |
| Actions that conflict with the broad category “duty of loyalty,” such as disclosing confidential information; taking public positions that conflict with SC positions or policy; “damage to image or brand.” | * First, look to the SC rule, policy or recognized norm at issue. Relevant leader or entity should discuss privately with leader, attempt to get informal resolution. * If violations are found and continue, take appropriate remedial steps as permitted by SC rules. |
| Sub­optimal use of volunteer and staff time. | * Focus resources on strategic priorities * Thoughtful assessment of new “requests” for impact and resource intensity ($$, staff and volunteer time) * Say “No” to requests that do not meet a threshold and level of priority. |

**Dealing with Conflict**

Keep these two concepts in mind: **prompt intervention** and **appropriate action**. Don't let things slide. You will only make a bad situation worse. Even the smallest dispute or disruptive behavior can easily escalate and get out of hand. Respond in a manner in keeping with the situation, with the least amount of drama.  
  
An escalated behavior issue can require more care, more time and documentation. It may involve a leader who is strongly resistant to feedback, or unwilling to learn and change. Sometimes it can also involve a violation of the Sierra Club's [Standards of Conduct](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/personnel/standards-of-conduct.pdf), or even formal misconduct - like sexual harassment or financial impropriety. Sometimes it could also take the form of a complaint or series of complaints from others about the behavior of a specific leader.  
  
The Sierra Club has specific processes set up for dealing with particularly challenging situations. Please refer to the resource links at the bottom of this page for more information.  Conflicts involving a combination of staff and volunteers should refer to [this resolution process](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/personnel/resolving-conflicts-between-staff-and-volunteers.aspx).   
  
**The best answer often is to manage these conflicts as close to the ground as possible. A chapter or group leader can reach out to their** [**Leadership & Capacity Building Team liaison**](https://docs.google.com/a/sierraclub.org/document/d/1pICTnHj7ic5osUvf8dmPEfTZ7NKVuEGxk5rPM7Q4eSY/edit?usp=sharing)**, who may be able to assist with addressing local issues.** [**Here is a basic structure for managing a conflict within your entity or team.**](https://docs.google.com/a/sierraclub.org/document/d/13fP_J7uOxXu4r4gmmJwPrx6OhOlIxhotpvPf6_9DEDw/edit?usp=sharing)

Remember: *It is the obligation of Sierra Club leaders to address violations of Standards of Conduct and instances of Misconduct*.

**Resources**

* [Sierra Club Policy: Handling Disruptive Volunteer Behavior](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/Handling-Disruptive-Volunteer-Behavior-2016.pdf)
* [Sierra Club Policy: Resolving Conflicts between Volunteers & Staff](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/personnel/resolving-conflicts-between-staff-and-volunteers.aspx)
* [Sierra Club Standing Rule: Dealing with Disruptive Personal Behavior (SR 2.2.6.c)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_SyQm-xMDSpX1dFSVZ0Y1o5SXM/view?usp=sharing)
* [Sierra Club Standing Rule: Termination of Membership or Suspension of Member Privileges (SR 5.10.2)](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/personnel/termination.pdf)
* [Outings Chairs: Resolving Complaints Guidance](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/local/chair/complaint_procedure.aspx)
* [Outings: Dealing with Problem Behaviors](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/Common/Incidents/problem.asp)

**What does accountability look like for you?**

We invite you to share your ideas and experiences. Some chapters have teams of volunteers who manage conflict within the chapter, with carefully tested processes and practices. We'd love to hear more about those examples, and to help provide ideas for making strong practices of accountability real across the Sierra Club.