



Assistant Crew Leader (ACL) Pathway

Volunteer Q&A

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Here is a summary of the most frequently asked questions on the ACL Pathway. This list is not exhaustive. However, this is meant to be a resource to support a potential ACL applicant through the application and onboarding pathway. This ACL pathway was created with applicant experience in mind. Applicants should feel supported, and have transparency in pathway steps and decision-making

Resources & Tools

What resources are available to prepare for becoming an ACL?

Read through the [Our Volunteer Leadership Team](#) page. This is your centralized location for finding information and all other resources as an applicant. This includes the [ACL Position Description](#), [Making of a WTA Volunteer ACL](#), and this [ACL Pathway Volunteer Q&A](#). Talk to your regional team, crew leaders, and assistant crew leaders about your interest in becoming an ACL. With the support of your crew leader and other ACLs try leading a tool talk for the day and practice teaching basic trail maintenance skills. Request feedback from CLs and ACLs, and continue to create positive, welcoming relationships with other volunteers.

Where do I go if I have questions, concerns, or feedback on the ACL Pathway?

Please reach out to the volunteer program team at volunteer@wta.org.

Pre-Application

As a green hat, can I access the ACL Basics onboarding training now?

The ACL Basics are only available to new ACLs along with current ACLs and CLs. As a green hat, we recommend that you focus on feedback from your volunteer leadership team to prepare to be an ACL. The pre-application period is a time to work on creating a welcoming experience for volunteers and to practice teaching trail maintenance basics.

Is there any advantage to applying during a certain quarter?

No. First and foremost it is about applying when you are ready for the role. Our [quarterly application cycles](#)—Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall are designed to provide flexibility so you can apply during the time that best fits your schedule and capacity. Choosing when to apply is more about your availability to complete pre-planned key steps in the ACL Pathway during the specified dates for your chosen quarter.

We encourage you to review the key dates for each quarter (Application period, Readiness Check weeks, Training sessions, and Onboarding periods) and apply when the timing aligns with your availability. If you are unable to meet the deadlines for your chosen quarter, you are welcome to apply for the next cycle that works better for you.

Winter 2025

- **Application Period:** December 1, 2024 – December 22, 2024
- **Readiness Checks:** January 8 – January 21
- **Onboarding Meetings:** February 16 – February 28
- **WFA + CPR Opportunities:**
 - February 1: Eastern Region
 - February 8: North West Region
 - February 15–16: Puget Sound- Central Region

Spring 2025

- **Application Period:** March 1, 2025 – March 22, 2025
- **Readiness Checks:** April 1 – April 12
- **Onboarding Meetings:** May 25 – June 7
- **WFA + CPR Opportunities:**
 - April 19–20: Puget Sound- Central Region
 - April 26: South West Region
 - May 10: Olympics Region



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- *May 24: Puget Sound- South Region*

Summer 2025

- **Application Period:** June 8, 2025 – June 30, 2025
- **Readiness Checks:** July 6 – July 19
- **Onboarding Meetings:** August 17 – August 30
- **WFA + CPR Opportunities:**
 - July 26: Puget Sound- North Region
 - August 23–24: Puget Sound- Central Region

Fall 2025

- **Application Period:** September 1, 2025 – September 21, 2025
- **Readiness Checks:** September 28 – October 11
- **Onboarding Meetings:** November 9 – November 22
- **WFA + CPR Opportunities:**
 - November 1: Puget Sound- South Region
 - November 8: Puget Sound Region

Application

What is the application process like?

We've streamlined the process into quarterly cycles (Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall) making it easier to plan ahead and find a schedule that works for you. Each quarter has its own application period, readiness check period, training sessions, and onboarding meeting period.

Here's how it works:

1. **Prepare for the role:** Start by reviewing the [ACL Position Description](#), [Making of a WTA Volunteer ACL](#), [Our Volunteer Leadership Team](#) page, and this Q&A. Talk to your regional team, crew leaders, and ACLs about your interest. Practice leading tool talks and teaching trail skills at work parties. Request feedback and confirm two references who are familiar with your volunteer leadership potential.
2. **Apply:** Fill out the ACL Interest Form and include your two confirmed references, either staff or WTA volunteer leaders. After we receive your form, we'll contact your references and determine whether you'll move forward to the Readiness Check.
3. **Readiness Check:** This is a conversation with your regional team to learn more about your skills, leadership style, and experience. It may take place virtually or in person, often before or after a work party during the scheduled Readiness Check period.
4. **Self-led Onboarding:** These are activities to set you up for success in your new role including self-led training, ACL Basics, and completing your wilderness medicine certification. Your ACL Basics training will take approximately 1.5 hours to complete. At this stage, you will have access to sign up to WTA's WFA & CRP courses scheduled throughout the year.
5. **Onboarding Meeting:** During this meeting, you'll have the chance to connect with your regional team to ask any questions about the role, training, and learn about regional ways of working.
6. **Continued Training in Role:** Within your first six months, you'll complete a virtual Leadership and Emergency Response training. These trainings are offered quarterly. Continue learning from other volunteers and leaders as you grow into your new role.



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How long does it take from applying to wearing an orange hat?

The process follows our quarterly application cycles and typically takes two to three months from application to completion, depending on your availability and readiness to meet the required steps.

- Within 2 weeks of submitting your interest form during the application period, you will receive an update on whether you are moving forward to the next step—Readiness Checks.
- Readiness Checks take place during the designated two-week period for each quarter.
- Successful applicants will then move on to complete their self lead ACL Basics and WFA training.
- Following training, applicants will complete their Onboarding Meetings during the specified two-week period for their quarter.

The timeline is structured to keep the process clear and manageable while ensuring you're fully prepared to take on your role. If the timing for a specific quarter doesn't work for you, we encourage you to apply in a future quarter that better fits your schedule.

I feel ready to be an ACL! What do I need to do to apply?

Before submitting your interest form, confirm that 2 references are ready and willing to speak to your readiness to be an ACL. This will not be a heavy lift for your reference. Please make sure your reference knows they will be contacted about you!

Who can be a reference for me, and what do I need from my references?

References can be current Assistant Crew Leaders, Crew Leaders, or WTA staff. To be mindful of people's time, we strongly prefer references to be currently volunteering or working at WTA. When you reach out to potential references, make sure to discuss your readiness to be an ACL according to the requirements listed in the [ACL Position Description](#) and confirm they can be a reference for you. You will also need their preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc) so we know how to reach out to them.

What if I do not know how to contact a potential reference?

We encourage you to speak with ACLs and CLs during your time at work parties. The advantage of multiple application cycles per year is that you have time to request a reference. If you are unable to connect with your potential reference through work parties, the volunteer team (volunteer@wta.org) can help to put you in touch with this person.

When are references contacted?

We generally contact references within 2 weeks of reviewing your interest form. If you are aware of a period in which your reference cannot be reached (vacation, etc.) please make sure to note that in the reference section of the interest form.

What kind of questions are asked in the interest form?

Besides logistical questions, we will ask you seven short questions to understand you better. The questions are about your comfort teaching basic trail maintenance skills, interest in becoming an ACL, additional experience outside of WTA (optional), and what you enjoy most about trail work.

What time do applications close?

Applications will close at 11:59 PM on the application close date.

What happens after I apply?

The volunteer team will review your interest form to ensure all necessary information has been collected.

- Interest forms are passed to the regional team for review, and references are contacted.
- You will be marked as an ACL applicant on work party rosters, so ACLs and CLs can help support and get to know you.
- All volunteer leaders will have an opportunity to highlight special attributes or voice any growth areas.
- Within 2 weeks of submitting your application, you will receive an update or decision from the regional team if you are moving forward with the readiness check.
- Decisions are based on the content of interest form and references, using the [ACL Position Description](#).

If at any point you are not moved on to the next step or stage, you will be notified and provided recommendations for your further development.



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Readiness Check

What is a readiness check?

This is an opportunity for the regional teams to check your readiness to be an ACL. At this stage we will look to understand your technical skills, ability to teach, and leadership skills.

Who schedules the readiness check?

If you move to the readiness check, the regional team will reach out to you to find a time, date, and location that works for both of you. This might be a phone call, virtual, or in-person chat.

Who will be at the readiness check?

You will be with two conversation leads, who may be a combination of regional staff, existing CLs & ACLs, and trails team staff.

What happens during the readiness check?

This is our chance to hear about your experiences on the trail and assess your readiness to be an ACL. It is also your chance to learn more about the regional team's expectations and to get even more familiar with the requirements of the role. Here are the questions we will ask you as a part of the readiness check:

- 1. What interests you about becoming an ACL?*
- 2. How do you make a work party feel welcoming for everyone, especially newer or first time volunteers?*
- 3. Can you tell us about a time you led a small group of green hats or helped teach a new skill to another volunteer? If it wasn't at a work party, feel free to share an example outside of trail work.*
 - a. Thinking about that experience, did any crew leaders or ACLs give you feedback? If so, how did that feedback exchange go?*
- 4. Please tell us about three different types of trail projects you've participated in.*
- 5. What trail skills do you feel most confident in?*
- 6. Are there any skills you're still hoping to build or improve? Either technical skills or leadership skills?*
- 7. Is there anything else you'd like us to know about you, your experience as a potential ACL?*
- 8. Do you have any questions for us?*

What are the applicant decisions based on?

Decisions will be made within regional teams. We will refer back to your answers in the interest form, readiness check, and references, while also reviewing the [ACL Position Description](#).

Unfortunately, I was not accepted. What should I do now?

Thank you for taking the time to apply. Your regional team should have provided you with areas of growth. Feel free to contact them if you are not clear on what and how to grow.

Wilderness Medicine Certification

What are the wilderness medicine training requirements?

If you are only planning on working in the frontcountry, day work parties, you can obtain First Aid and CPR training. If you would like to join any of our backcountry work parties, you will need WFA and CPR training. Additionally, you will need to schedule your WFA/First Aid + CPR training either for a free WTA-provided course or an in-person course you schedule yourself (in which the cost can be reimbursed up to the amount WTA pays their WFA provider per participant.). Our training is typically a hybrid model with part virtual learning, and then one day of in-person training. For new ACLs who are looking to take WFA, we highly encourage taking our 2-day in-person WFA, which does not have a virtual WFA component.



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Will a Wilderness First Responder certification fulfill certification requirements? Does WTA provide WFR certification or recertification?

Obtaining a WFR certification will fulfill ACL certification requirements. This means, if you have a current WFR certification, you do not need to take either WFA or First aid. WTA does not provide WFR certification or recertification at this time.



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How frequently does WTA provide a WFA + CPR course?

WFA + CPR courses are offered during each application cycle to align with the quarterly onboarding process.

- **Winter 2025:**
 - Feb. 1
 - Feb. 8
 - Feb. 15-16
- **Spring 2025:**
 - Apr. 19-20
 - Apr. 26
 - May 10
 - May 24
- **Summer 2025:**
 - Jul. 26
 - Aug. 23-24
- **Fall 2025:**
 - Nov. 15

You are welcome to join a training in any region, even if it's outside the area where you regularly volunteer!

WTA does not provide First Aid + CPR. If you are interested in pursuing First Aid certification this will need to be taken externally with an in-person provider.

Do most volunteer leaders take the WTA-provided session or do a lot of leaders need to find a session on their own to meet this requirement?

The majority of WTA volunteer leaders certify through the WTA-provided course. We highly recommend volunteer leaders take WTA-provided classes as our instructor is prepared with the trends and themes from incidents that have occurred during work parties, and tailors the course content accordingly.

Onboarding

What does my onboarding include?

To set you up for success in your new role, your onboarding includes self-led training (ACL Basics), WFA/First Aid + CPR training, and an onboarding meeting with your regional team. These activities will provide you with the basics needed before wearing that orange hat for the first time. As part of onboarding, you will be provided an onboarding checklist that details the actions required.

When is the regional onboarding meeting scheduled?

Once you have completed the self-led training - ACL Basics, you will then reach out to the regional team to let them know to schedule the regional onboarding meeting. You can schedule and attend the regional onboarding meeting prior to completing a WFA/First Aid + CPR class, as long as you are scheduled to attend a class. In this case, while you can receive your orange hat during the regional onboarding meeting, you can only sign up for work parties as an ACL once you have completed your WFA/First Aid + CPR training.



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Where is the regional onboarding meeting located?

This will depend on the regional team. This might be a virtual meeting, or if in-person, this will likely be located in your region.

How much time should I plan on spending during the regional onboarding meeting?

These onboarding meetings may take between thirty minutes to one hour, but your regional contact can provide you with more specifics.

What else can I expect about the regional onboarding meeting? When do I receive an Orange hat?

This may be completed individually or as a group. At a minimum, you will cover the [ACL Position Description](#), regional ways of working, and identify strength areas and growth opportunities. This is the meeting where you will receive your orange hat! If you are meeting in person, you will receive your hat handed to you. If this is a virtual meeting, you will receive a plan for how the orange hat will be passed to you.

What's next after completing the regional onboarding meeting?

Congratulations! You are now ready to wear your orange hat, and sign up for work parties as an Assistant Crew Leader! Remember that as you move forward, you can sign up as either an ACL or crew member depending on your comfort level. While you have now completed an introduction to training, we still have the next step for you in training. In the first 6 months after being onboarded, please plan on taking our Leadership and Emergency Response training. These will be posted under the "[training](#)" filter in the work party view.

Ongoing Training

Aside from WFA/ CPR + First Aid training, is there any other training required for me to take?

Yes, all ACLs must complete a Leadership & Emergency Response (ER) training session within 6 months of assuming their role. These sessions are scheduled in advance and are hosted online.

In this training, you will gain a deeper understanding of both emergency response situations and leadership challenges encountered on the trail.

- **Emergency Response:** Participants will continue to grow in confidence and deepen their understanding of emergency response strategies.
- **Conflict Management:** Participants will enhance their conflict resolution skills, enabling them to navigate crew dynamics effectively.
- **Addressing Bias:** Participants will be equipped with strategies to recognize and address biases when they arise.

How do sign-ups for required training work?

Sign-ups happen in much of the same ways as signing up for a work party. Volunteer leaders have an extra "training" view on the "Find a Work Party" page. Trainings are posted around 4-6 weeks in advance of the training date, and sign-ups happen on a first come first serve basis. Volunteer leaders are also provided an annual calendar view of all the known trainings for the year.

General Questions

What is the annual requirement for volunteering as an ACL out on work parties?

We do not have an annual requirement, but we do strongly encourage all ACLs to communicate their availability and interests with their regional team. We know that life circumstances and changing interests happen, and regional teams want to stay in the loop to support you.

If I become an ACL, can I still volunteer as a green hat?

Absolutely! There may be days when you want to focus on the project work or a day when you want to shadow another ACL or CL to learn a new skill or technique. When you sign up for work parties, you can sign up to either volunteer as a crew member or as an ACL. If you do sign up to be an ACL for a work party, please do come prepared to be an ACL for that work party

If I become an ACL, can I volunteer at youth work parties?

To ACL at youth work parties, you will need to complete a [background check](#).