



TU's Service Partnership Program Guide **July 2020 Edition**



Introduction

Trout Unlimited (TU), through our 400 nationwide Chapters, has been working for over 60 years to conserve, protect, and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. TU's 300,000 grassroots members and supporters bring our mission to life, creating thriving communities of anglers and conservationists across the country.

This Program Guide will assist Trout Unlimited volunteer leaders who have taken on the exciting responsibility of playing an active role in Trout Unlimited's Service Partnership at the national, Council, or Chapter level. As a volunteer leader in the Service Partnership, you not only have joined a long tradition of TU members who have led the fight to conserve, protect, and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds, but you have also committed yourself to welcoming first responders (i.e., fire service, medical, law enforcement), members of the military community (i.e., active duty service men and women, reservists, veterans), and their ever-supportive families into TU's ready-made community of passionate conservationists and anglers. TU Councils and Chapters are where friendships are made; where someone comes to learn fly casting and then returns to teach it; where passions for conservation are born; and where further commitments to service are fostered. Every community has a population of first responders and veterans and their families who can benefit from our approach – and through whom TU can better protect, reconnect, restore, and sustain healthy waterways throughout North America.



Every Chapter and every community approach the Service Partnership a bit differently. There is no one size fits all approach or way to do this “right.” If you have additional questions or require assistance, please reach out to your Service Partnership staff. Congratulations on your role as a TU volunteer leader and thank you. The time and energy you commit to the Service Partnership is crucial to the conservation of our nation's coldwater resources.

Trout Unlimited Service Partnership Background and Mission

Trout Unlimited's Service Partnership began in July 2020 as an expansion of the Veterans Service Partnership (VSP), which began in 2011 as an initiative to serve our nation's active duty service men and women, reservists, veterans and their families, and engage them in meaningful and sustainable ways with TU Chapter activities. In July 2020, TU formally renamed VSP to Trout Unlimited's Service Partnership. With this new name came a new mission as well. Trout Unlimited offered to first responders – specifically members of the fire service, medical, and law enforcement communities, and their



families – the same opportunities and recognition which were offered to the military community since 2011. This includes a free one-year introductory membership for new-to-Trout-Unlimited Veterans and First Responders and all the benefits of a paid membership.

This strategic change was aimed toward allowing TU chapters and councils the ability to more broadly tailor engagements with communities of service-oriented, leadership-trained, diverse individuals – like the first responder and military communities – in ways that make the most sense for both chapter resources and local availability. The strength of the Service Partnership continued to be TU’s network of 300,000 members and supporters that operate out of over 400 Chapters across the country, and the ability of those by TU’s Service Partnership to be quickly integrated into their Chapter community and continue their passion for service.



Starting a Chapter or Council in the TU Service Partnership

The goal of Service Partnership is to get TU members thinking about how we can actively engage our nation’s first responder and military communities, and their families, in the TU mission. Successful Service Partnership programs aim higher than one-off events or activities; every successful TU Service Partnership program puts into place systems to continually engage and involve local first responder and military populations with ongoing Chapter activities.



There are no specific requirements to initiate a Service Partnership program within a Chapter or Council. Chapters are encouraged to seek service opportunities that suit their interests, their location, and their volunteer resources. Some Chapters may offer fly casting instruction and fishing experience. Others may offer fly tying or rod building programs with their local fire services, police benevolent associations or Veterans Administration hospitals. Others still may principally work with college veteran’s programs and veteran clubs. Some may do all the above. Chapters may hold weekly or monthly meetings and on-stream outings or may elect to meet less frequently.

To begin a TU Chapter Service Partnership program, consider forming a sub-committee. An active, effective Service Partnership program can involve significant work, so having a dedicated sub-committee of the Chapter can distribute the workload and avoid burnout among volunteers. Chapters should reach out beyond the regular volunteer cadre for Service Partnership volunteers. This can include through the regular Chapter newsletter or e-newsletter, but also through social media – which can be particularly effective in mobilizing younger volunteers. Something as simple as, “The [insert name] Chapter is interested in starting up a Service Partnership program to introduce our local first responders and military community, and their families, to the healing power of our waters, with a goal of thanking them for their service and engaging them in our Chapter activities. For those interested in volunteering to help coordinate a series of events and activities associated with this new program, please contact [name] at [name]@gmail.com.”

The next step in establishing a local Service Partnership program is to determine the size of the first responder, active service military and/or veteran population in the Chapter vicinity to determine what sort of program and scale might be attained. There are a good number of first responders and veterans living in every community in America. Good sources for this information include the local fire department(s), emergency medical service



squad, police department, Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts, American Legion Post, county Veterans Service Officer, high school Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps programs, and local college veteran service offices. Most Chapters have enough populations to justify building a Service Partnership program. However, for instance, if you find yourself in an area with a very small veteran population, you might consider partnering with nearby first responders or with other Chapters containing higher veteran demographics.



Partnerships

At the national and local levels, the TU VSP successfully partnered with numerous other organizations to leverage combined resources and increase program impacts. These partnerships – which will continue under the TU Service Partnership – include Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Warriors and Quiet Waters, Rivers of Recovery, the R4 Alliance, Embrace-A-Vet, Higher Ground Sun Valley, Student Veterans of America, and the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (T.A.P.S.).

In cooperation with the TU National Staff, Chapters and Councils should consider finding suitable local or national partners with whom to work to identify first responder and veteran populations and coordinate events.

Partners need not be solely first responder or veteran service organizations. There may well be corporations or local businesses that, through partnership with TU, can help Chapters and Councils build relationships and even develop important sources of funding.

TU and Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing Memorandum of Agreement

- In 2019, Trout Unlimited and Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF) established a national-level Memorandum of Agreement that established the conditions whereby TU Chapters can provide skilled volunteers to help carry out PHWFF program activities.
- PHWFF is dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active military service personnel and disabled veterans – who must meet specific eligibility criteria as defined through the PHWFF Program Guide – through fly fishing and associated activities, including education and outings.
- Many TU Chapters across the country have a Memorandum of Agreement with PHWFF Program Leads to formalize the local partnership and define each party's responsibilities. However, TU Chapters and Councils should recognize, that it is only in supporting the conduct of PHWFF events for disabled active military service personnel and disabled veterans that the MOA applies.
- TU Chapters and Councils are strongly encouraged to develop opportunities to engage the full first responder and military community – active duty service men and women, reservists, veterans, and their families – in Trout Unlimited's mission.

Lessons Learned from Successful Event Planning

There are various types of events that you can plan. We recommend using each event to improve upon your previous experiences and set a positive tone for activities to follow. In general, a good Service Partnership event results from successful planning and execution in the below four areas:

Communication and Marketing. Chapters and Councils with a history of successful Service Partnership events communicate well and advertise their events to the broadest audience. Again, the first place to start is with a mailing or e-mailing to your membership, which can be well informed from information available in the Leaders Only Tools section of tu.org. All officers and committee members have access to the rosters, label printing, and a bulk e-mail tool. Ensure your Chapter's Service Partnership Coordinator position accurately represented in the Leaders Only Tools section so that the Chairperson of your sub-committee has the appropriate accesses.



Professional advertising materials can have a significant impact on event attendance. Take advantage of TU's relationship with tu.ticketprinting.com to order cost-effective, professional event posters, flyers, and other promotional materials. Then identify a volunteer responsible for distributing the event materials locally, with extra emphasis in areas first responders and military members are likely to frequent. Posters are best placed one month in advance of the event and again two weeks prior.



Send press releases to your local daily and weekly papers, as well as any local fishing blogs, local radio, or other media outlets that have community calendars. Newspapers, radio, and TV are generally quite interested in covering first responder and veteran fly-fishing events. Ensure you inform the local media of your event, through personalized invitations if helpful. Be aware of regulations regarding taking photographs of or interviewing military personnel. Media consent and hold harmless forms are available for your usage [in the Tacklebox](#).

Another cost-effective way to advertise your showing is by creating an event on your Chapter's Facebook page. These advertisements are free to create but can be boosted at a minimal cost. For most Chapters, a boost to guarantee the post will reach 3,000-5,000 people will cost less than \$20!

Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere. When choosing the venue, consider places to would be appropriate and could accommodate the unique needs of any disabled or older participants. You'll find that some participants will have limited mobility, so easy access to the facility or to the water is important. Many states have created special places on streams or lakes that are outfitted with ramps or platforms to accommodate disabled participants.

Except for events supporting PHWFF participants under the TU-PHWFF MOA, ensure your event is structured in a way that makes it clear that all (e.g., women, men, young, older) are encouraged to attend. Consider advertising your event with images of people of different ethnicities, ages, and genders to encourage the broadest diversity.

One of the simplest things you might do to make your event feel welcoming to newcomers is to offer nametags. That simple act indicates that you're not a clique and that the one new person in the room isn't being singled out as "new."



Organization. Start with a schedule and build in the right number of volunteers. Have you identified who will be the speaker, if anyone? Will someone formally welcome all the first responders and veterans and explain the goals of the Service Partnership program going forward? Will people be set loose to tie flies, for example, or will you assign mentors to each new person who comes through the door? Create a volunteer plan and ensure each volunteer understands his or her task for the day. Thinking through those little details in advance of any event, makes the activity run much more smoothly.

Understand and enforce [TU's liability limitations](#) associated with any TU Service Partnership event. If you're organizing your event through your Chapter, you are covered under TU's liability policy. However, this coverage does have limitations, notably associated with any events involving watercraft or alcohol. Please familiarize yourself with what those limitations, and don't hesitate to reach out to [TU's volunteer operations staff](#) with questions.

Meaning and Enjoyment. There are a myriad of reasons TU seeks to engage first responders and military service men and women, and their families. One major reason is for the healing that can occur when we connect those communities to the restorative and rejuvenating power of the water – and to the simple joy of fishing.

For your events, it is helpful to have a fishing activity to "hook" new participants (e.g., fly tying, fly casting instruction, rod building demonstration, actual fishing). Fishing is the "hook", and we know our TU members love to fish and teach others the sport.

For your event, be sure you include refreshments, that you include time for breaks and downtime to laugh and get to know one another. Building relationships can be just as impactful as tying a fly.

The Critical Piece: Follow Through. During your first event or series of first few events, be sure to take notes on how things went so that you'll be able to make subsequent improvements. This way, you'll find that each event becomes smoother and easier to organize and deliver a successful event. At every Service Partnership event, highlight your Chapter's major activities and accomplishments. This will help your participants, many of whom may be new to the concept of conservation, better connect fishing with conservation and will likely encourage them to become involved in your efforts going forward. Head to [the Leader's Store](#) to purchase TU brochures, stickers, hats, copies of *TROUT Magazine*, and other materials to help get the word out about your Chapter and the benefits of joining TU.

Complimentary Memberships

New participants in the Service Partnership program may receive [a complimentary membership to TU](#). Complimentary memberships can be used for individuals who have been involved, in some manner, with your Chapter Service Partnership event or program. It can be as simple as an individual showing up at a Chapter meeting, attending a Chapter sponsored event or participating in an event run by a partner organization.

Key Positions and Responsibilities

Trout Unlimited Service Partnership Director

- The TU Service Partnership Director is a member of the TU national staff who guides and supports the Trout Unlimited community's engagements our nation's first responder and military communities in the coldwater conservation mission by providing program vision and leadership with TU staff and the network of TU members and supporters. The Service Partnership Director empowers volunteers to more fully support and engage the first responder and military communities, works to raise the profile of the Service Partnership to attract more participants and volunteers; and both sustains and grows program operations.

Key Responsibilities

- Improve the resources and training available to Service Partnership coordinators and volunteers.
 - Organize and improve the resources at www.tu.org/service
 - Be an active and visible representative of Service Partnership with TU Councils and Chapters.
 - Create opportunities to train Council and Chapter volunteers to maximum effect.
- Sustain existing and develop new sources of funds to support additional national trips and events.
- Build and market the Service Partnership brand externally, and within TU membership and staff.
- Increase the number of TU members brought in through the Service Partnership.
 - Enable Service Partnership participants, volunteers and leaders to more closely reflect the diversity of the fly-fishing demographic in terms of age, gender, and race.
- Educate TU staff regarding the opportunities for their programs through engagement with the Service Partnership.
- Enable additional Chapter and Council-level Service Partnership events to be conducted independently.
- Organize and execute national trips and events, and promote Chapter-level events
 - Improve the process for organizing and oversee execution of national Service Partnership trips.
 - With partner organizations, develop opportunities for collaborative events to maximize shared funding and public relations.
 - Promote Chapter-to-Chapter Service Partnership events. Help organize and support such events.
- Increase the number of Chapters with Service Partnership coordinators and that actively support the nation's first responder and military communities.
- Lead successful strategic planning processes that increase the impact and efficiency of our work because of collaboration between the Service Partnership and all TU departments, and increased transparency and accountability in internal operations and budgeting.

Reports To: Vice President, Volunteer Operations

Budget Support: Trout Unlimited Restricted Funds

Council Service Partnership Chairperson

- The Council Service Partnership Chairperson has wide-ranging responsibilities. He or she is an active conduit for communication amongst the Chapter coordinators as well as within the Council and should provide advice and resources to Chapter coordinators and the Council board on topics such as inclusion and advocating for participants perspectives regarding the Council's coldwater conservation mission.

Key Responsibilities. The Council Service Partnership Chairperson must be a current TU member who will ensure that the following responsibilities are completed, either personally or by way of delegation:

- Develop and support Service Partnership Coordinators at the Chapter level across the Council area.
 - Provide welcome orientation to review role and responsibilities and Service Partnership tools.
 - Update online leadership roster in the Leaders Only Tools section of www.tu.org.
 - Provide on-going support and training.
- Organize regular opportunities for Chapter Service Partnership coordinators to communicate their successes, ask questions and learn from one another. This may take the form of a monthly conference call, semi-annual retreats, special trainings at Council meetings, welcome communications, orientation opportunities and more.
- Network with Service Partnership coordinators and Service Partnership Council Chairs in other areas to share successes and learn from other efforts.
- Attend Council meetings to update members on Service Partnership efforts and provide trainings and/or resources for Chapter coordinators.
- Disseminate Service Partnership related information to Service Partnership Coordinators to support their efforts.
- Assist in the development of Service Partnership programs in partnership with Chapters.
- Retain records and keep the board abreast of upcoming events, budget status, donors, etc. These documents may include:
 - Service Partnership Coordinator roster
 - Legacy documents for Service Partnership events
 - Event descriptions with implementation details
 - Key volunteer contact list
 - Donor lists (provide a copy to Treasurer for tax deductible letter preparation)
- May take a lead role in administration and updating of Council social media, email and/or print newsletters and other communication vehicles to amplify Service Partnership efforts. These duties may also be assigned to another vetted committee member, Chapter communications chair, Chapter webmaster or other board position.

Elected By/Reports To: Board of Directors

Term Length: Per Council by-laws

Time Commitment: Approximately 10 hours a month; additional time required for committee work and other board commitments.

Budget Support: Limited

Chapter Service Partnership Coordinator

- The Chapter Service Partnership Coordinator leads the Chapter's efforts to offer organized, engaging and welcoming events to first responders and military members, and their families, to encourage a safe and fun atmosphere for learning about conservation, TU and angling. The Chapter coordinator recruits new members, engages them in TU's mission, facilitates their retention, and promotes them in leadership roles. This individual actively develops or enhances events at the Chapter level, initiates new programs to provide meaningful engagement opportunities, facilitates membership drives to increase membership amongst first responders and military members, and communicates directly with Service Partnership participants in the Chapter.
- The Coordinator is encouraged to develop an annual Service Partnership Plan for the Chapter, along with an associated budget. In this annual planning effort, the Service Partnership

Coordinator is supported by the Service Partnership Chair and all resources and shared experience available through the Service Partnership programs across the country.

- The Service Partnership Coordinator position has wide-ranging responsibilities, requiring much more than simply being present at board meetings, reporting Service Partnership updates to the board and effectively leading a Service Partnership Committee. He or she is an active conduit for communication to members and other stakeholders by giving proper notice of upcoming events and timely distribution of event materials to the Chapter as well as the general public. Additionally, the Coordinator should provide advice and resources to the board on topics such as inclusion as well as advocating for members and their perspectives.

Key Responsibilities. The Service Partnership Coordinator must be a current Trout Unlimited member who will ensure that the following responsibilities are completed (personally or by way of delegation):

- Develop an annual Service Partnership plan with budget.
- Create and maintain a current list of members that are first responders and military members.
- Connect with current, lapsed and near expired members that are first responders and military members to introduce oneself and personally invite them to an upcoming event (e.g., Chapter meeting). May work in partnership with the membership committee.
- Connect with first responder and military members who have attended an event or have become a new member. This may consist of a quick email with upcoming events or news. Ideally this happens on a regular basis (e.g., monthly). Alerts can be set up to facilitate this effort.
- Network with other Service Partnership Coordinators and Service Partnership Chairs to share successes and learn about new opportunities.
- Facilitate at least two Service Partnership events a year for the Chapter.
- Attend Council meetings and/or Chapter board meetings to update others on Service Partnership efforts and learn more about other Service Partnership activities.
- Retain records and keep the board abreast of key issues (e.g., upcoming events, budget, donors, volunteer hours). These records may include:
 - Service Partnership committee roster
 - Legacy documents for events
 - Event descriptions with implementation details
 - Key volunteer contact list
 - Donor lists (provide a copy to Treasurer for tax deductible letter preparation)
- May take a lead role in administration and updating of Chapter social media, email and/or print newsletters and other communication vehicles. These duties may also be assigned to another committee member, Chapter communications chair, Chapter webmaster or other board position.

Elected By/Reports To: Board of Directors

Term Length: Per Chapter by-laws

Time Commitment: Approximately 15 hours a month; additional time required for committee work and other board commitments.

Budget Support: Limited