

Texas Master Naturalist Program New Member Training Survey Results

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About the Survey

- 42 of the 49 TMN chapters completed the survey.
- Survey had 64 questions covering: New Member Applications, Training Schedule, Finances, Curriculum Units, Engagement, and the End of Training.
- Survey responses included “select all that apply” and open response questions.
- Analyzed using the constant comparative method (finding “themes”/Nvivo) and descriptive statistics.
- Specific chapter answers maintained at the state level for future reference.

New Member Applications and Outreach

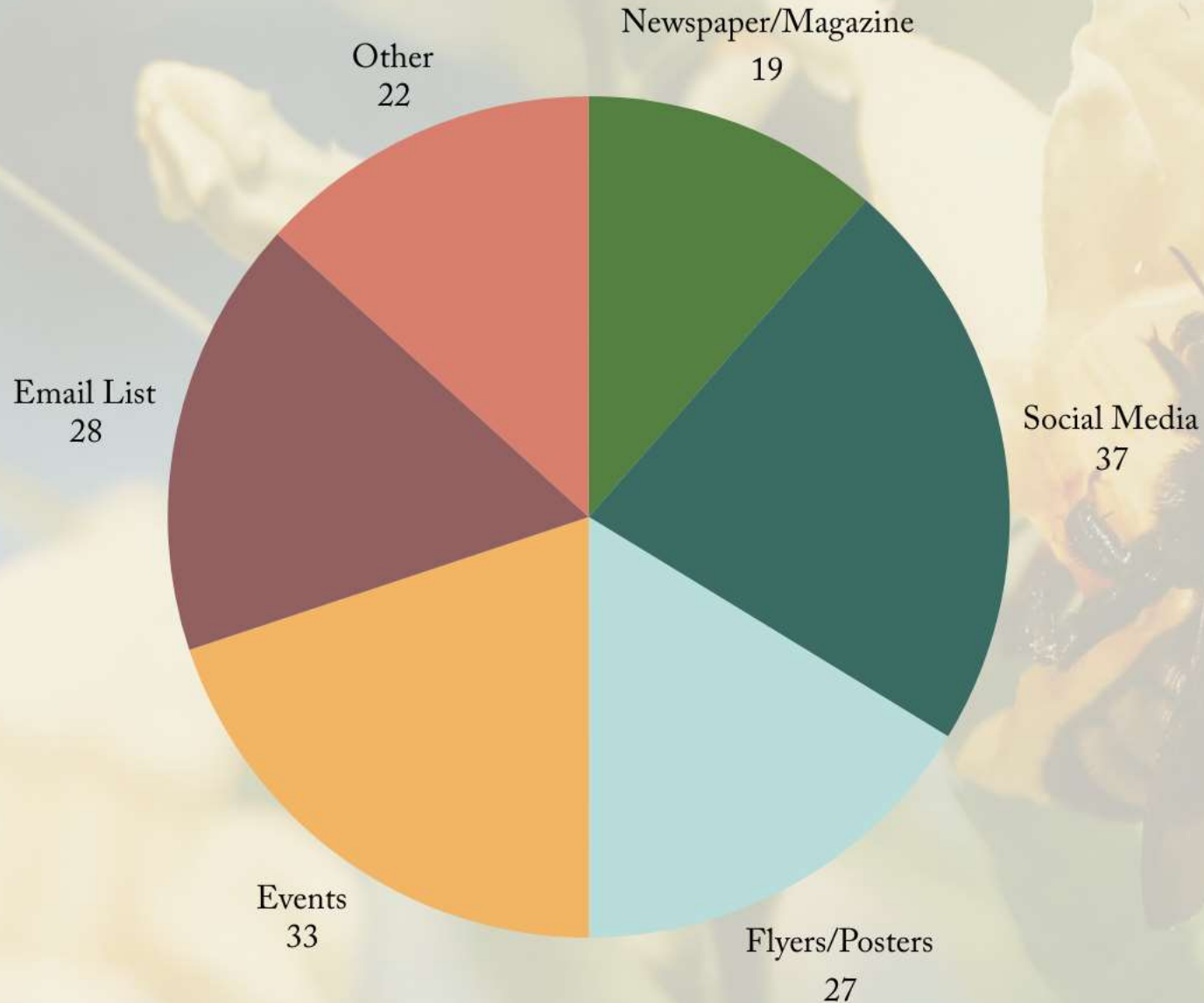
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How do you Promote your New Member Training in your Community?

Select all that Apply:



Other:

- Word of Mouth
- Chapter/State Website
- Through Partner Organizations
- At Chapter Meetings
- Chapter Advisors
- Local News Shows

Do you Have an Application Process for New Members?

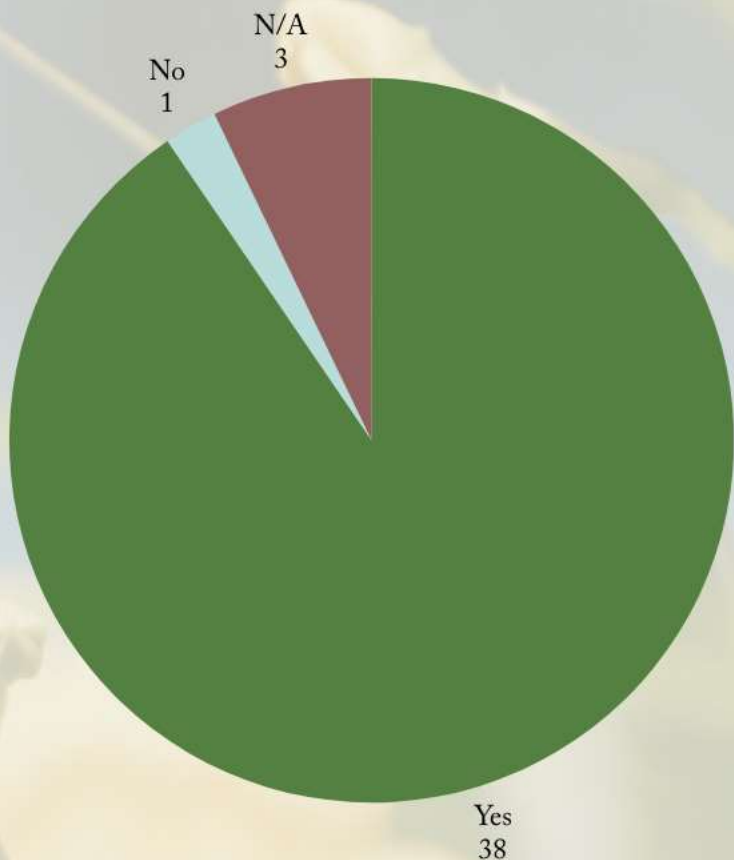
Open-Ended Response:

Yes, we have an application that:

- Also collects class payment
- Allows us to review/score/rank candidates with a rubric
- **Collects a brief summary/skills/fun facts about the candidate**
- Collects demographic information only
- Collects their availability (dates/times of day)
- **Is an “interest form” that precedes a final application**
- Is the VMS system
- **Sets expectations of commitments for the course/program**

Once we receive an application, we:

- Collect fees
- Contact the applicant by phone to learn more about them
- Review to assign a compatible mentor
- **Score based on rubric before acceptance**
- **Send out course information and final application**
- **Start VMS Application/Background check**

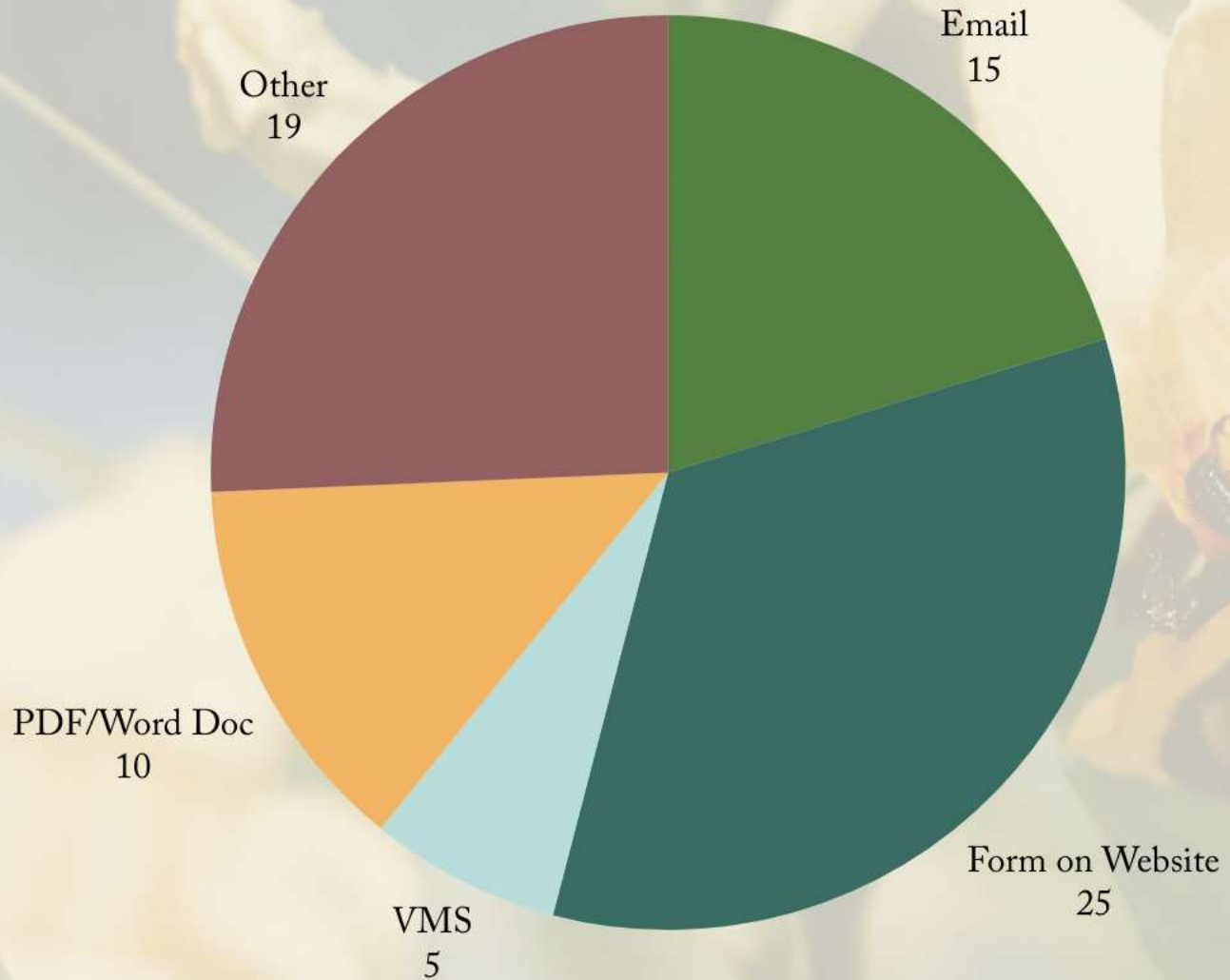


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What Methods do you use to Collect Applications?

Select all that Apply:



Other:

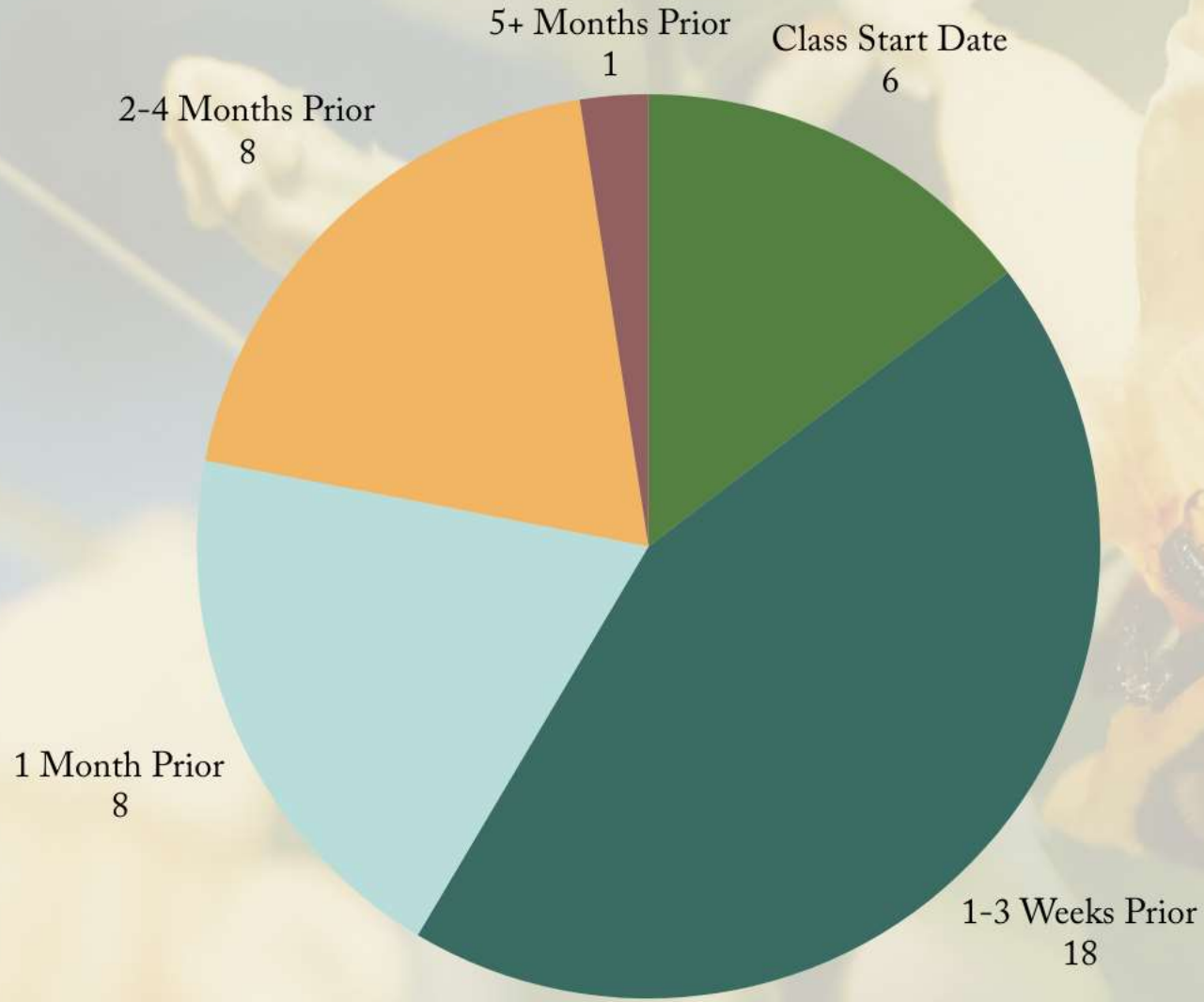
- Filled out in person
- Hand delivered (At event or to Extension Office)
- Mailed in
- By phone

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When is your Application Deadline Compared to your First Day of Class?

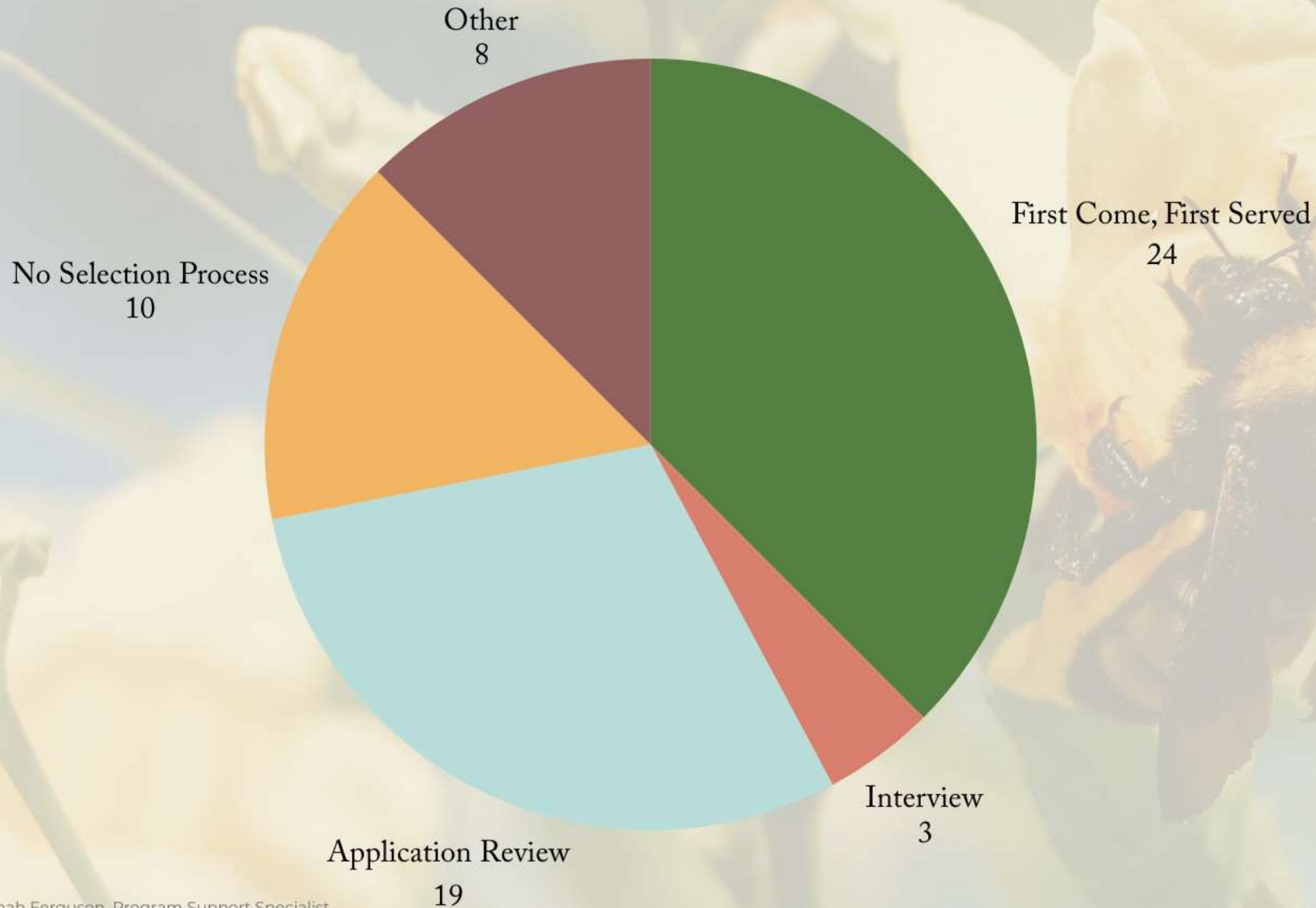
Open-Ended Response:



- Additional Comments:**
- Accept applications throughout the year
 - Accept applications in a specific time period

How do you Select Members for Training Sessions?

Select all that Apply:



Other:

- Residency/Work address in Service Area
- Screening Call
- Attendance at a Meet & Greet to get to know them
- “First year since COVID-19 we needed to limit our class size.”

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What Factors do you Look for in New Trainee Applicants?

Open Ended Response:

We look for:

- **Ability to give time/attend training/volunteer** ★
- Areas of interest
- **Background/professional experience**
- Desire to learn/teach
- Diversity of background, experience, community, etc.
- Passion for/commitment to the TMN mission
- **Past/current volunteer experience**
- **Willingness to serve** ★

No factors, just:

- Emphasizing training/volunteer expectations weeds out people
- Ensuring they reside in chapter service area
- **First come, first served**
- First to pay course fees

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What is your Average Training Class Size?

Open Ended Response:

Do you have a Waitlist? Open Ended Response

- Yes (17)
- No or N/A (15)
- More of an “Interest List” (9)

Additional Comments:

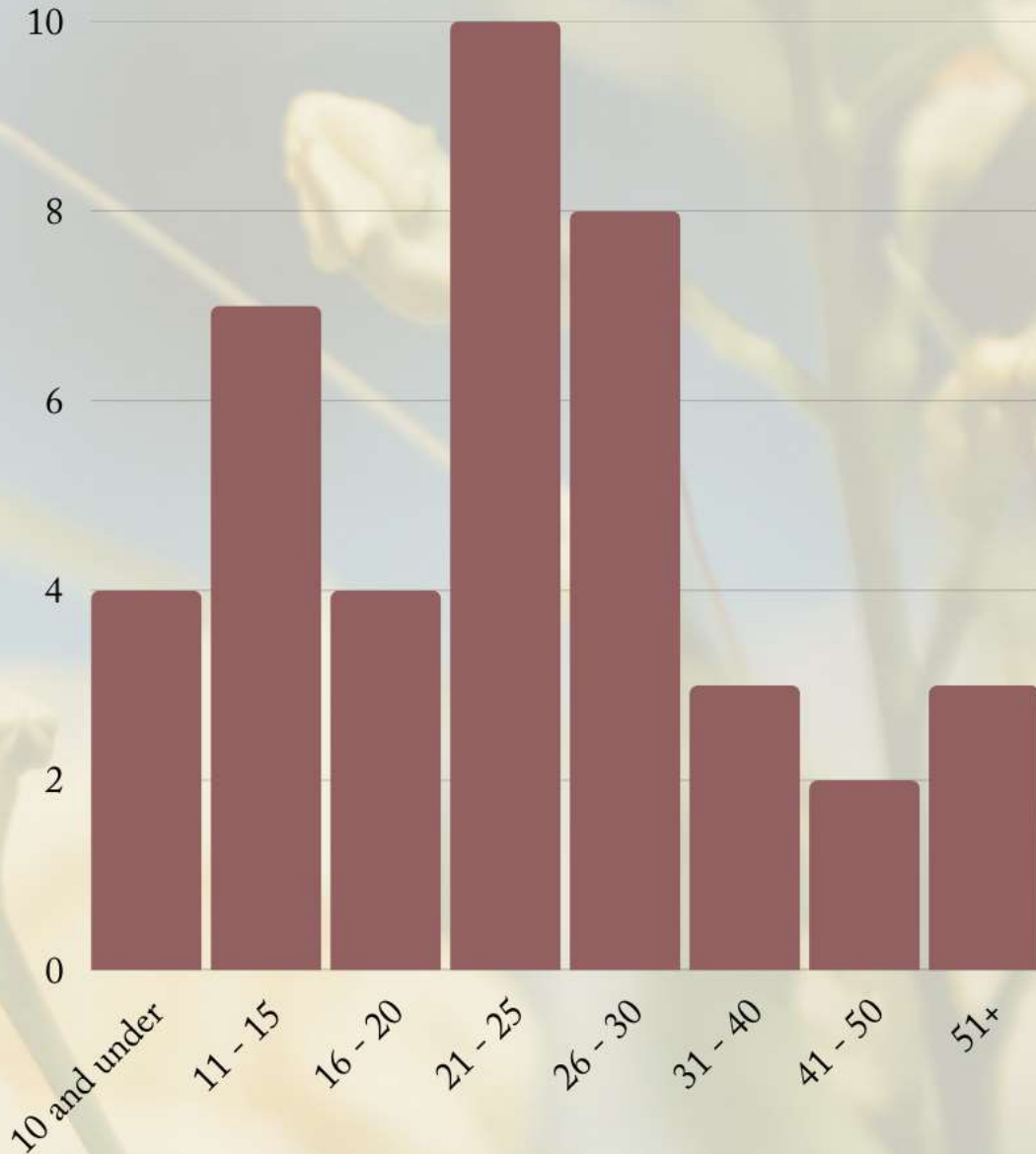
- We would use a waitlist if we needed to
- Interest list continues year to year
- Interest form receives option of seat before general public
- Open seats go to next qualified applicant based on rubric
- Open seat goes to first come, first served

Collegiate Trainees? Open Ended Response

- Yes (6)
- No or N/A (22)
- Yes, but not a focal point/rare (14)

Additional Comments:

- They don't have the free time
- Need paid internships more than volunteer work
- Often don't complete certification
- We allow certain courses to count towards certification requirements

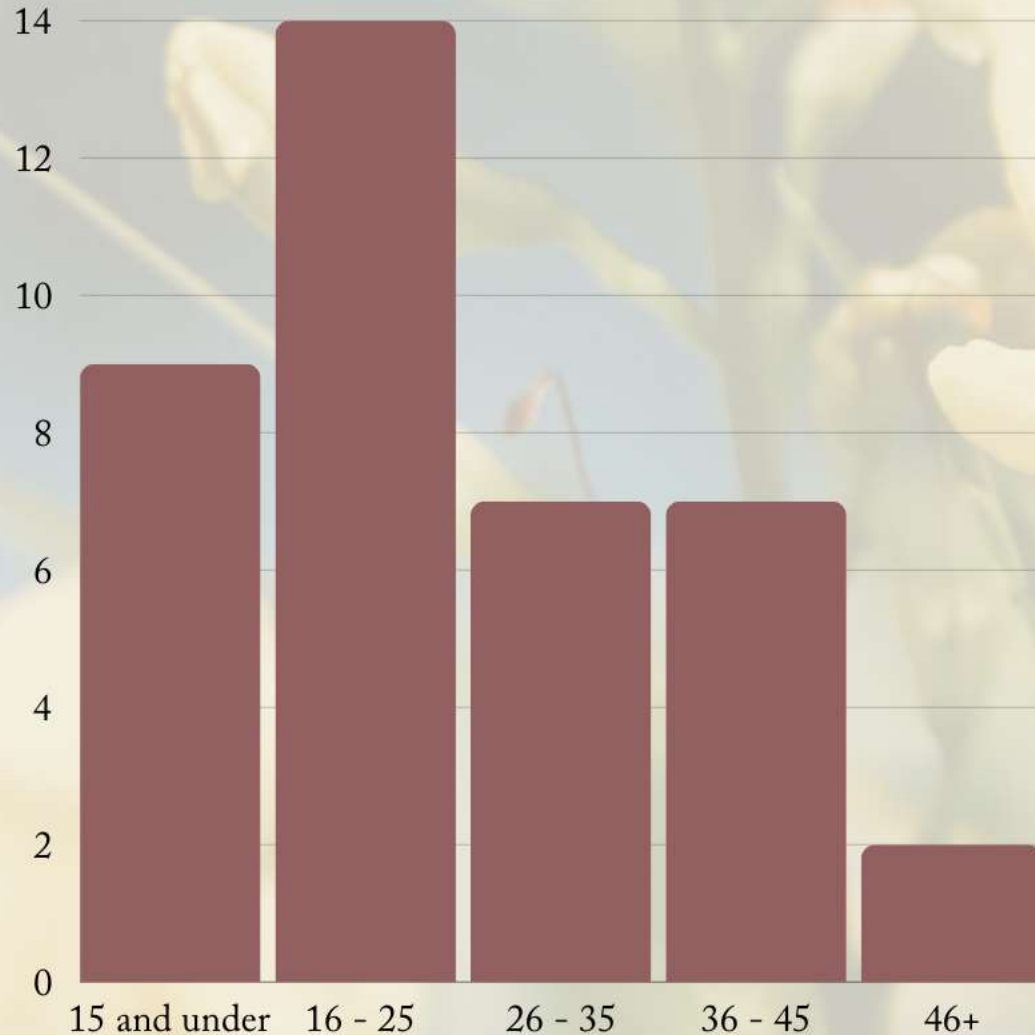


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What Have You Found to be the Most Effective/Impactful Training Class Size?

Open Ended Response:



Additional Comments:

- Most preferred smaller classes (about 10 to 25) for manageability, ease of integration, ease of assistance, more interactive, quality of experience, member longevity, etc.
- Will have two field trip options for the same topic to help manage size

Factors Limiting Training Class Size?

Open Ended Response

- **Field trip logistics/size** ★
- Managing chapter growth
- **Meeting room size/availability** ★
- Number of people interested
- Schedules of trainees/teachers/mentors
- **Teacher/mentor availability**
- Trainees to members/teachers ratio

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Do You Have any Orientation Events for New Members?

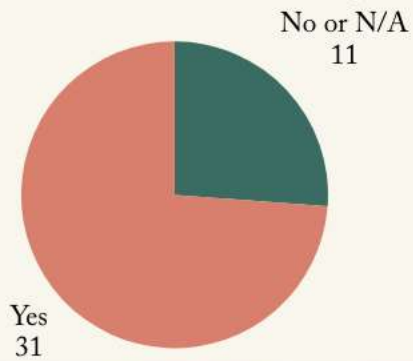
Open Ended Response:

- **First part of first class** ★
- **Kick-off event/meet and greet/orientation prior to first class** ★
- No, but they're encouraged to attend any prior chapter meetings
- No

Do You Provide a Training Packet?

Open Ended Response

- **Provided as a hardcopy (print outs, binder, etc.)**
- Provided as part of a goodie bag
- **Provided online**
- We're developing one
- We direct them to our website
- We have an email list



How do you Communicate the TMN Goal?

Open Ended Response

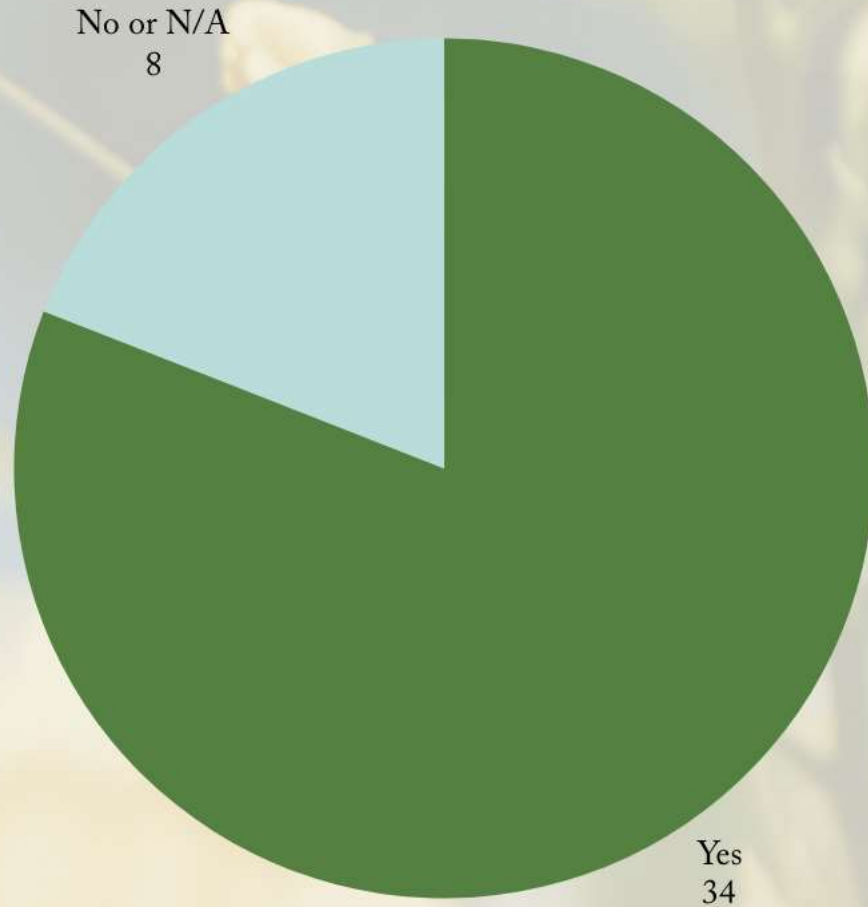
- **At the first class/orientation** ★
- During interviews/interactions
- **On training class marketing materials**
- On training website page
- **Through the application process** ★

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Do You Have a Training Team That Helps Support the Training Director?

Open Ended Response:



- **A small committee providing input** ★
- Class coordinators for each topic
- Classes divided into pods with guides
- Just started a training team
- **No team, but co-directors**
- **Subcommittees with each aspect of training divided** ★
- Used to have a committee but lost volunteers
- Would love one but don't have willing volunteers

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Training Schedules

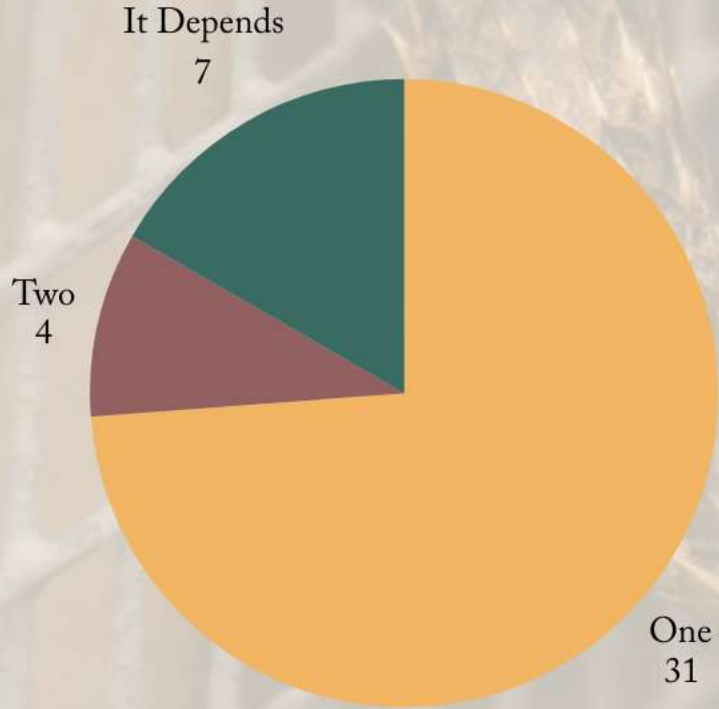
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How Many Trainings Do You Host in an Average Year?

Open Ended Response:

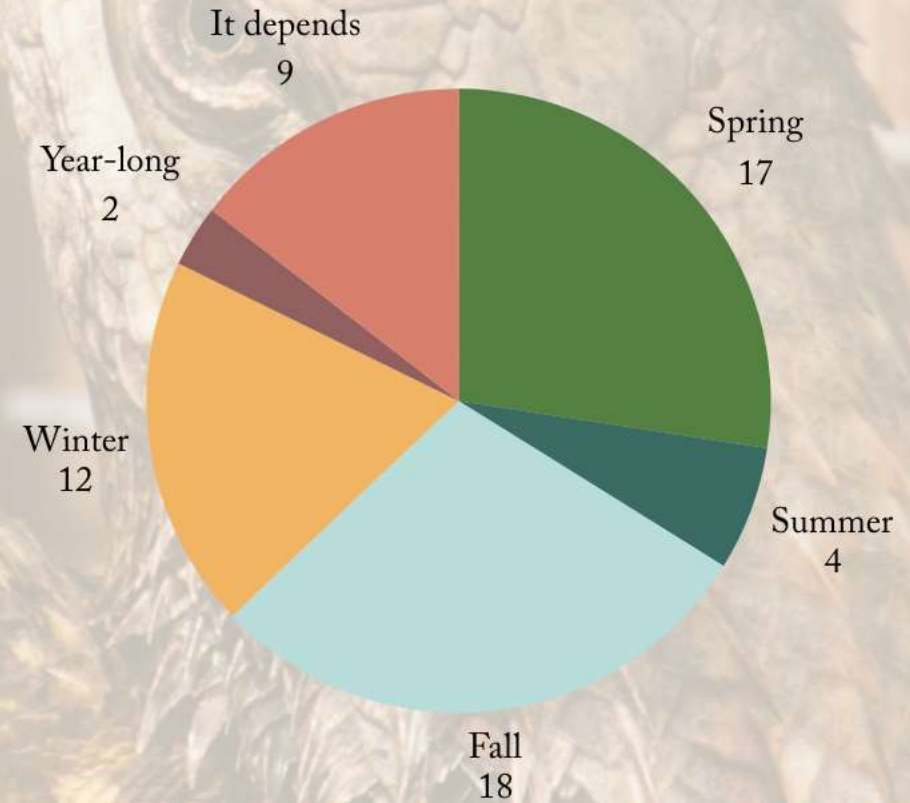


Additional Comments:

- Host training every other year
- Just moved to two classes
- Only host classes in years with enough people
- Plan to add a second class soon
- Tried two, but moved back to one

What Seasons Do Your Training(s) Begin In?

Select All That Apply



Additional Comments:

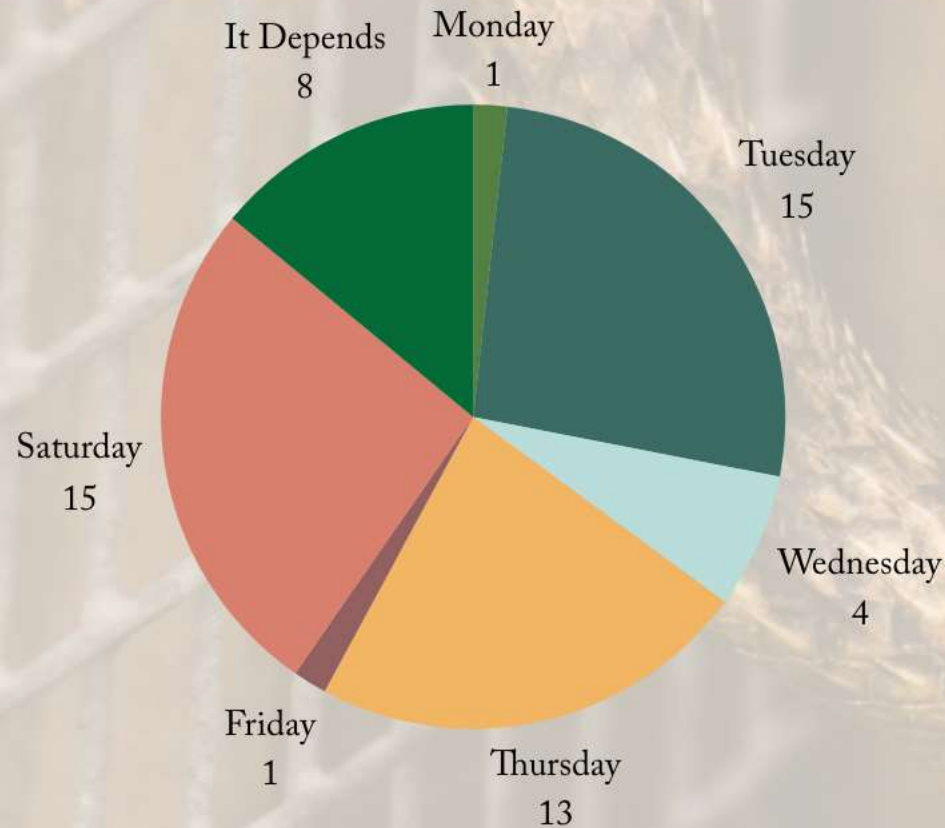
- Switched from Fall to Winter/Spring
- Goes from Winter into Spring
- Based on college semesters

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What Day(s) of the Week Do you Hold Class Sessions?

Select All That Apply

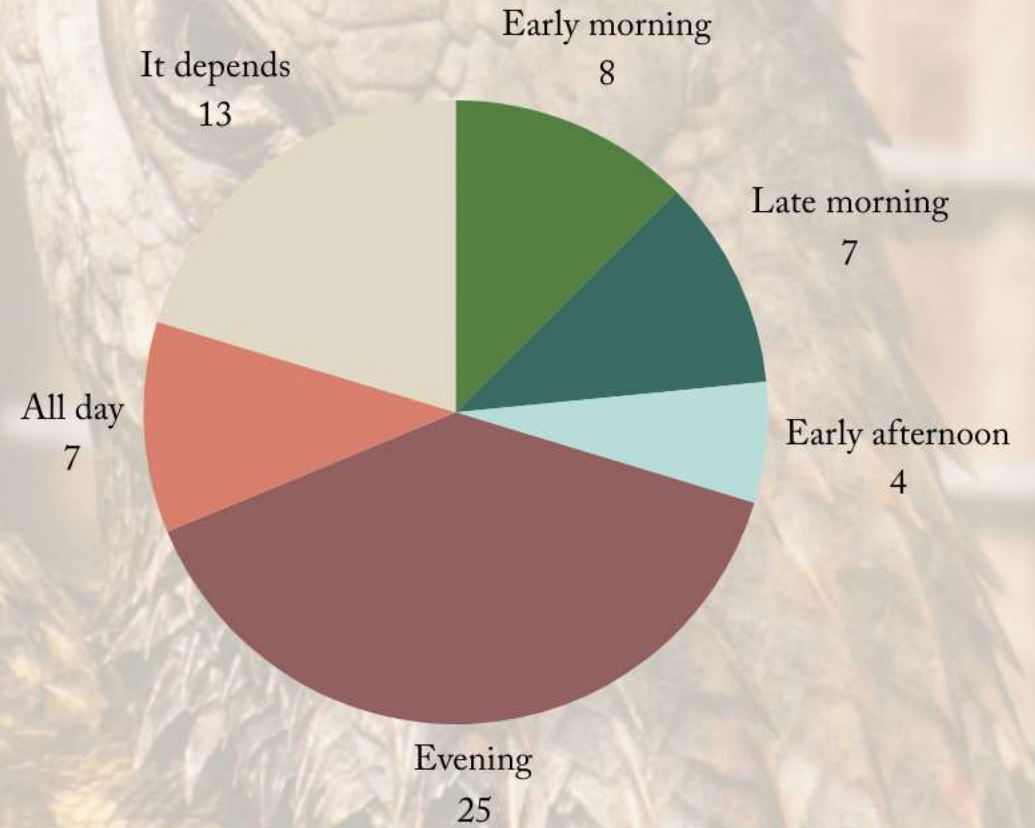


Additional Comments:

- Alternate the day based on the season
- Depends on classroom availability
- Depends on presenter availability
- Trying a new day of the week

What Time(s) of Day Do you Hold Class Sessions?

Select All That Apply



Additional Comments:

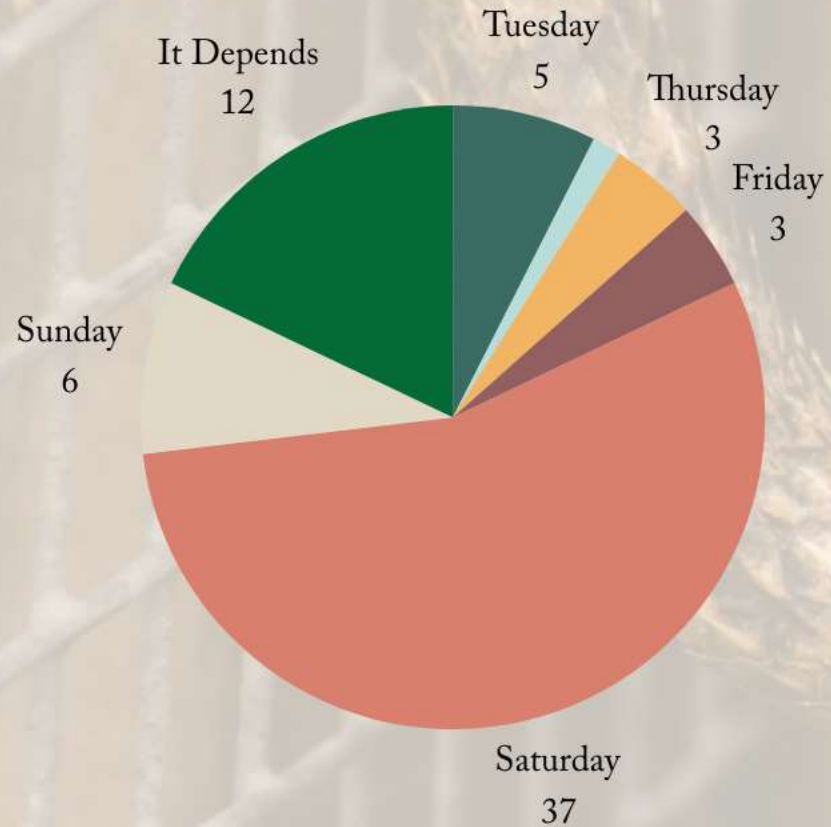
- Include class and field work into a long day
- One season has mornings, one season has evenings
- Switches each year to fit different schedules
- Trying a different time of day

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What Day(s) of the Week Do you Hold Field Sessions?

Select All That Apply

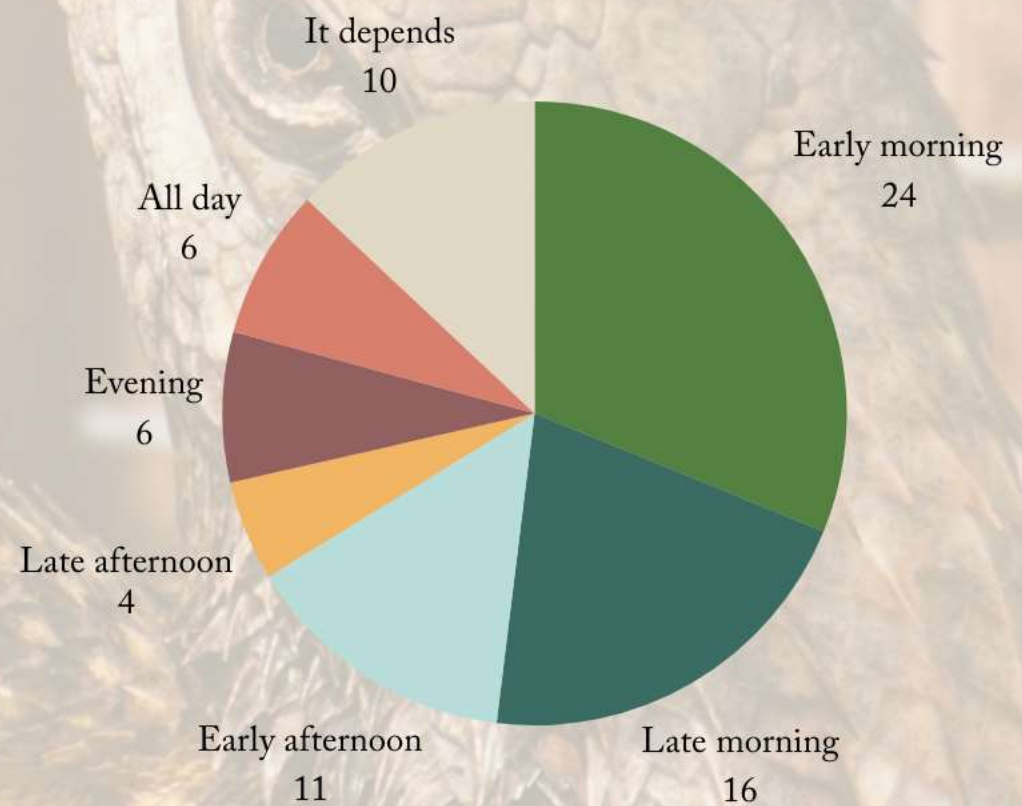


Additional Comments:

- Mostly Saturdays, but will change if needed
- Some follow behind classes
- Try to switch it up to accommodate schedules

What Time(s) of Day Do you Hold Field Sessions?

Select All That Apply



Additional Comments:

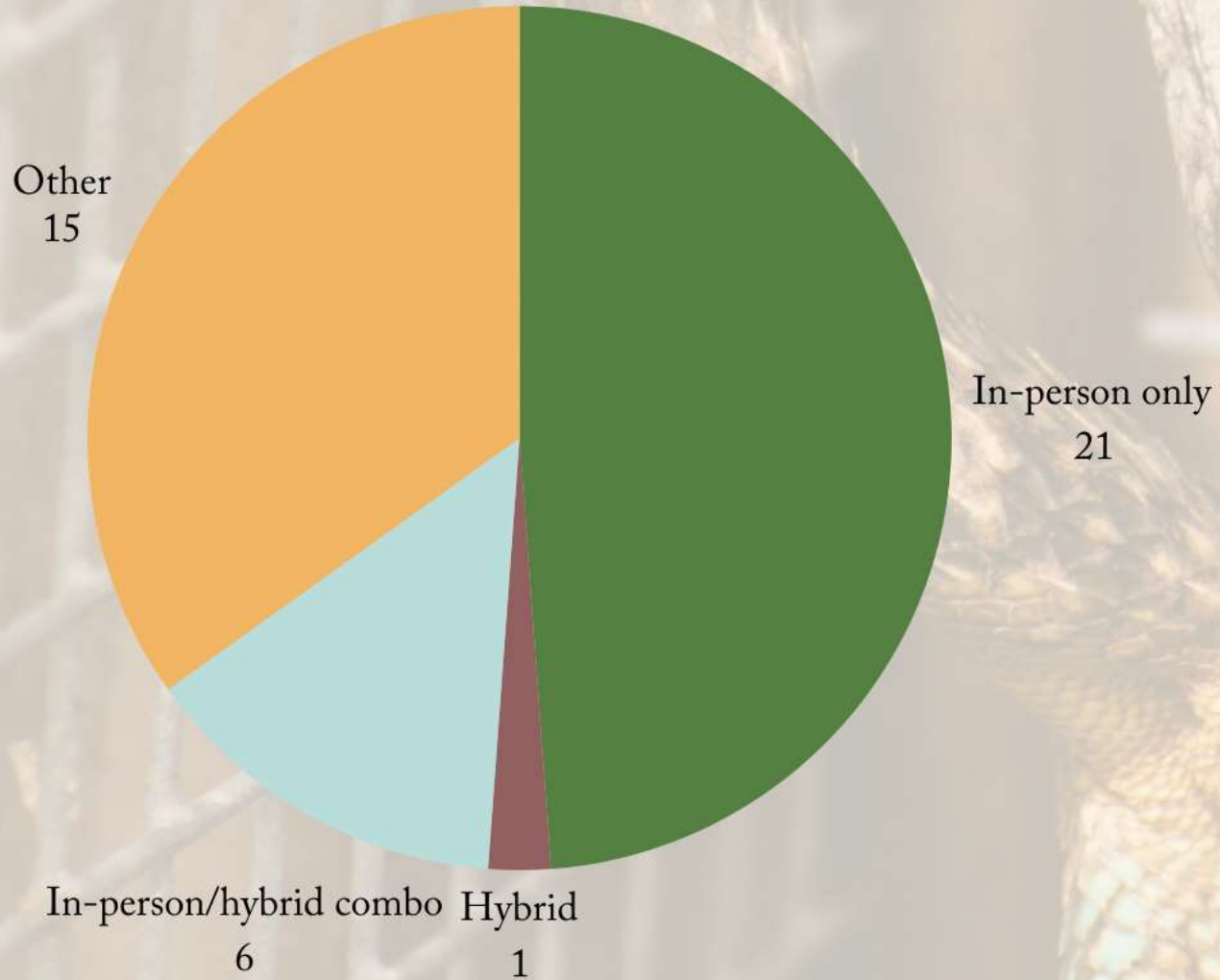
- Depends on the season
- Depends on when the class session ended
- Do some at night to get different experiences
- Try to do the morning for weather/wildlife

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What Format do You Host Classes In?

Select All That Apply



Additional Comments:

- Encourage in-person, but provide a hybrid option
- No hybrid, but some hosted in person and some online
- Offer hybrid only for excused absences
- Offer hybrid to record classes for future use
- Online classes, in-person field trips
- Transitioned back to in-person post COVID-19

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Make-up Policy for Missed Classes/Field Sessions?

Open Ended Response:

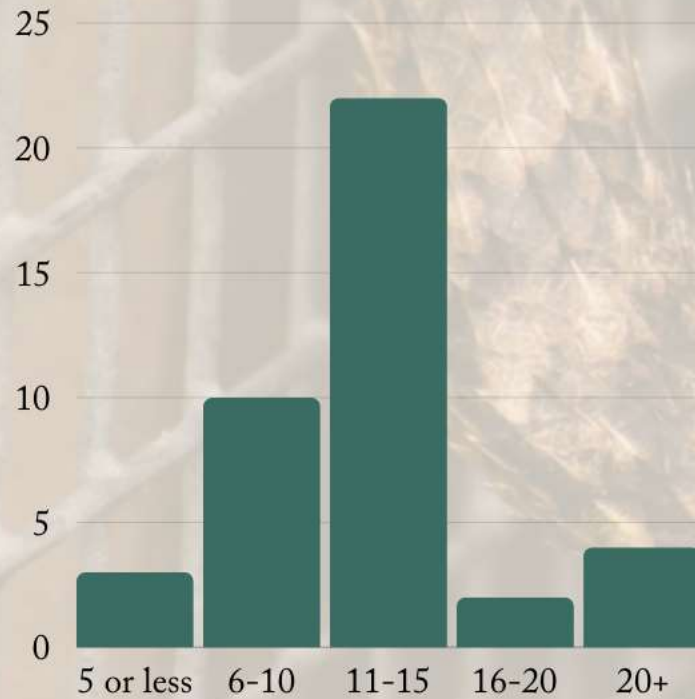
- **Attend equivalent at neighboring chapter** ★
- **Attending equivalent at next training class**
- **Handled on a case-by-case basis**
- **One absence excused, next need make-up work**
- **Watches recording and answers set questions**
- **Watches recording and submits summary** ★
- **Watches recording and discusses later with director**
- **We host extra sessions for make-ups** ★

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How Many Classroom Sessions do you Host?

Open Ended Response

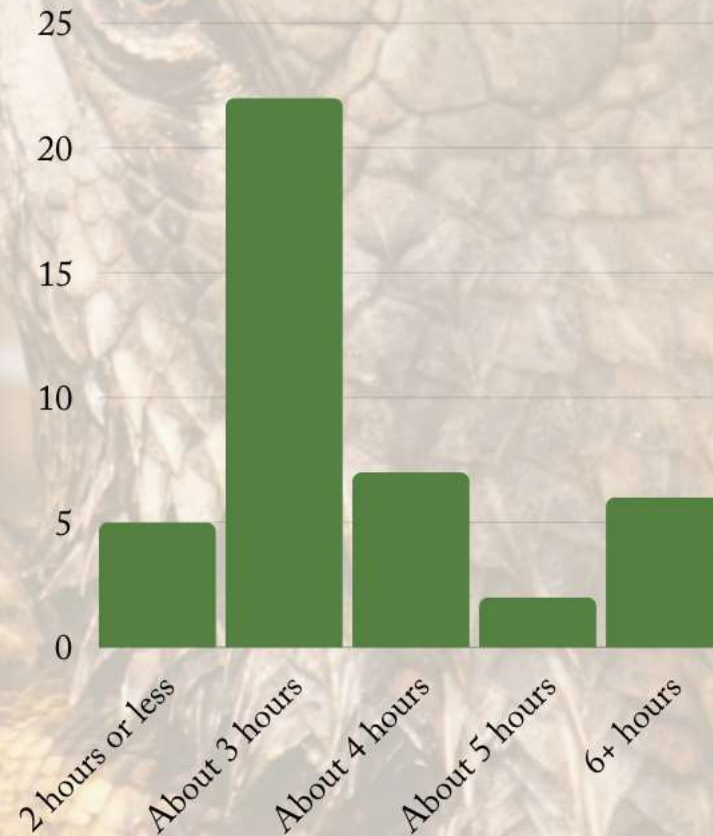


Additional Comments:

- Class numbers vary by season
- Extra planned for unforeseen circumstances and make-ups
- # of class plus an orientation event

How Long are your Classroom Sessions?

Open Ended Response

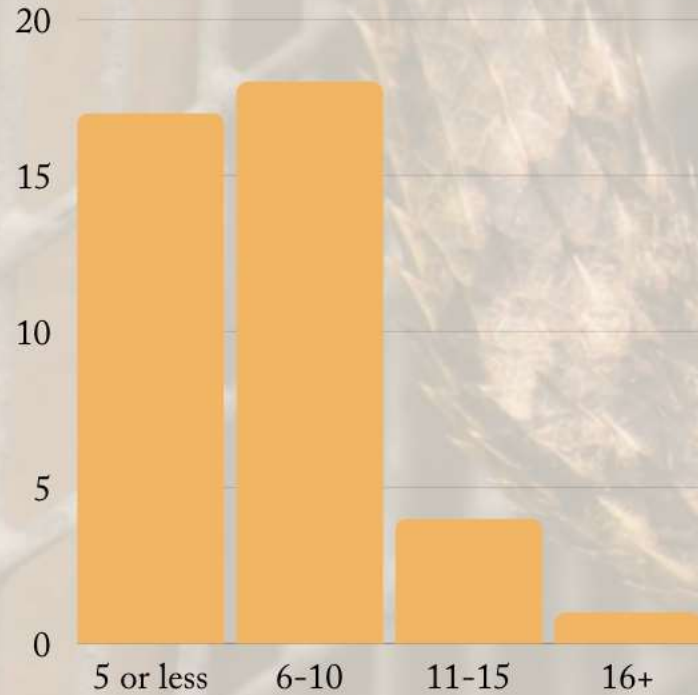


Additional Comments:

- Most had a range of hours “depending on topic/schedule”

How Many Field Sessions do you Host?

Open Ended Response

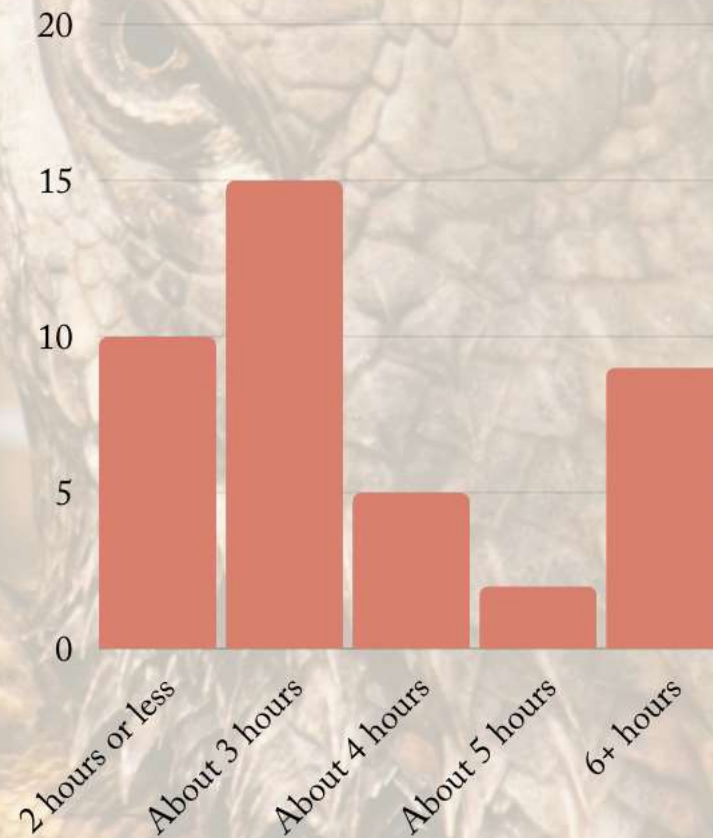


Additional Comments:

- Changes based on season
- Extra planned for unforeseen circumstances and make-ups

How Long are your Field Sessions?

Open Ended Response



Additional Comments:

- Host several shorter field sessions in a day
- Most had a range of hours depending on topic and location
- Offered “all day” (one session in morning and one session in evening)

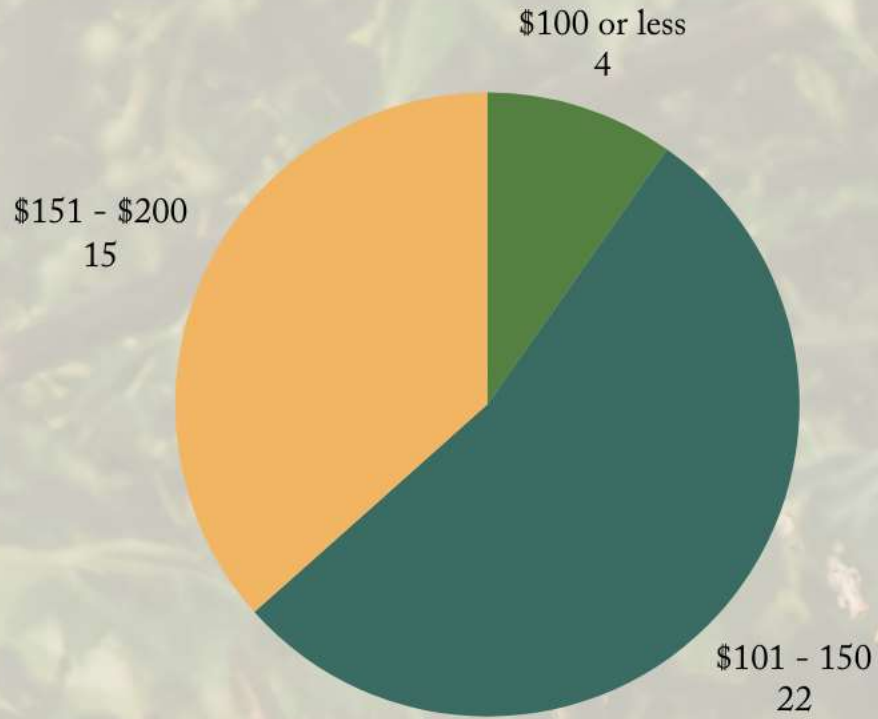
Financial Structure

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How Much Does Your New Member Training Cost?

Open Ended Response



Additional Comments:

- A fee is collected with application that goes towards final tuition cost
- Cheaper rate for college students
- Second in household/couple discounted rate
- Includes first year's dues

At What Point do You Collect the Training Fee?

Select All That Apply



Additional Comments:

- Monthly installments allowed case by case
- Delay in deadline for scholarships
- With application and at first class
- At a pre-class orientation
- After the application but before class

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What do New Members Receive with their Training Class Fees?

Open Ended Response:

They receive:

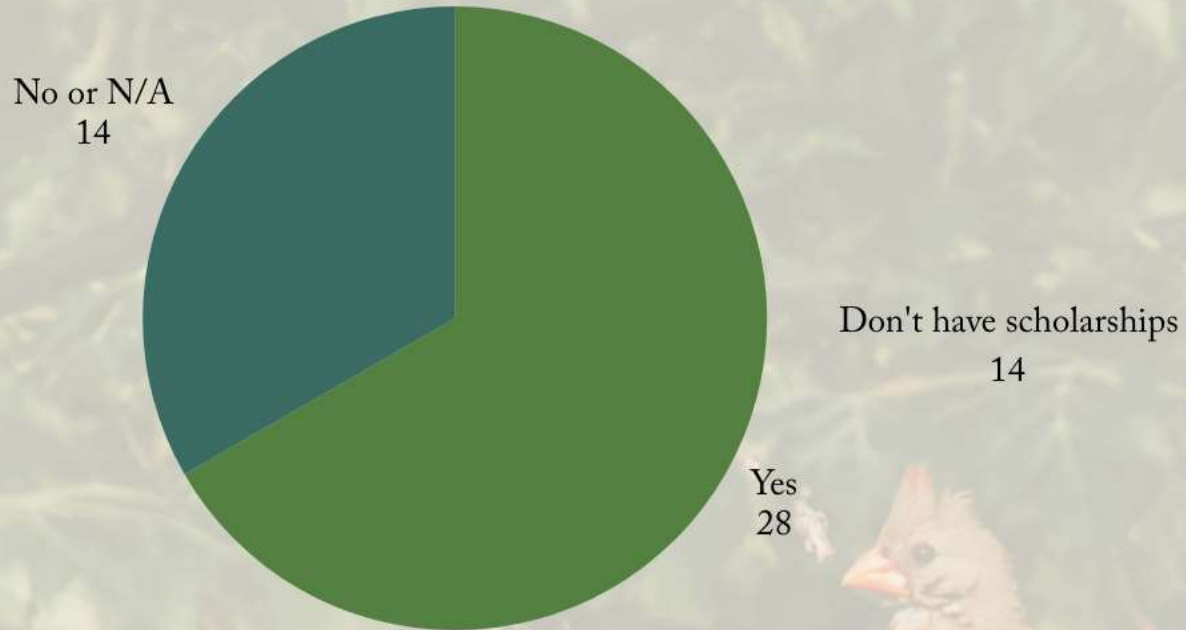
- Chapter membership dues for 1-2 years
- **Goodies (tote, pens, hat, notebook, etc.)** ★
- **Meals at certain sessions**
- **Nametag/trainee badge** ★
- **New student binder/handbook/welcome packet**
- Sand County Almanac
- **Shirt** ★
- **Snacks**
- **TMN Curriculum** ★

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Do You Provide Scholarships for Training Classes?

Open Ended Response

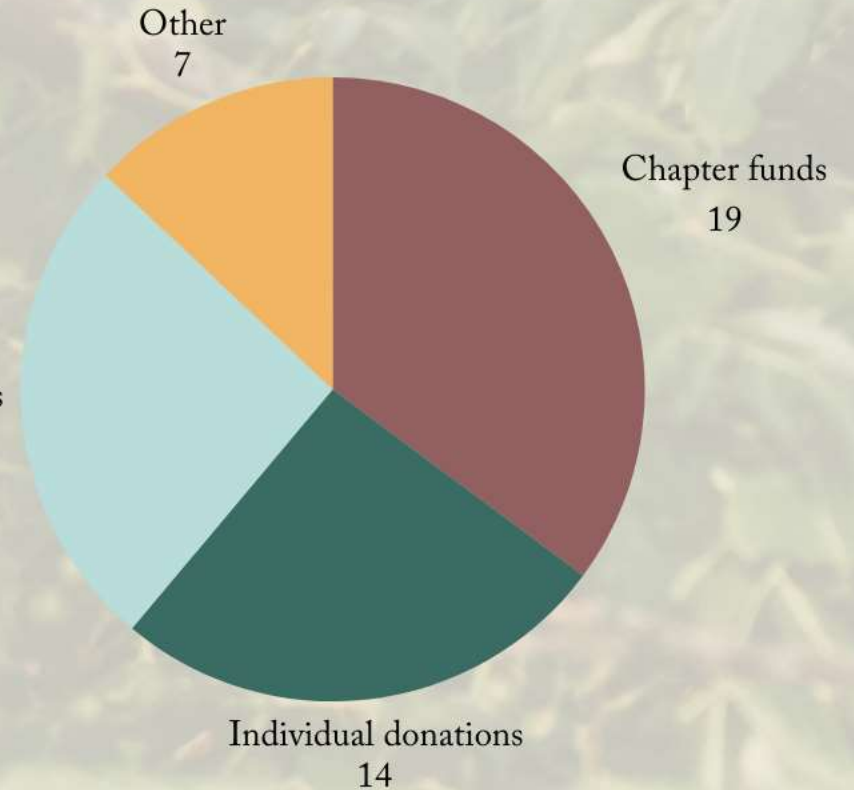


Additional Comments:

- No standard application, just as needs arise
- Have in the past, haven't recently
- Yes, with a formal application process
- Plan to start offering some
- Have the ability to, haven't seen need

How Are Scholarships Funded?

Select All That Apply

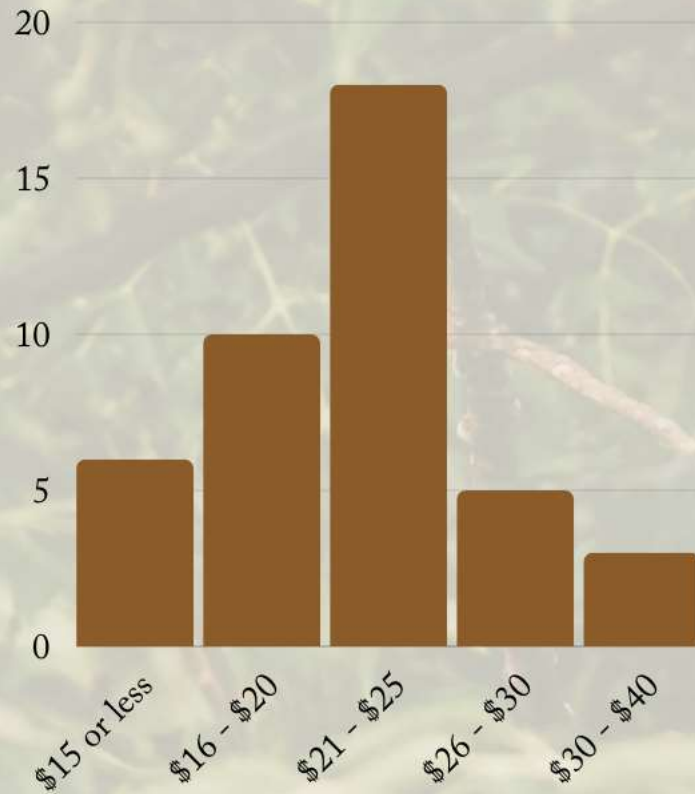


Additional Comments:

- Included in education budget
- Memorials
- Chapter "library" with used textbooks. (Textbooks donated by members who moved, passed, have means to purchase an extra, etc.).

What Are Your Annual Dues for Chapter Members?

Open Ended Response

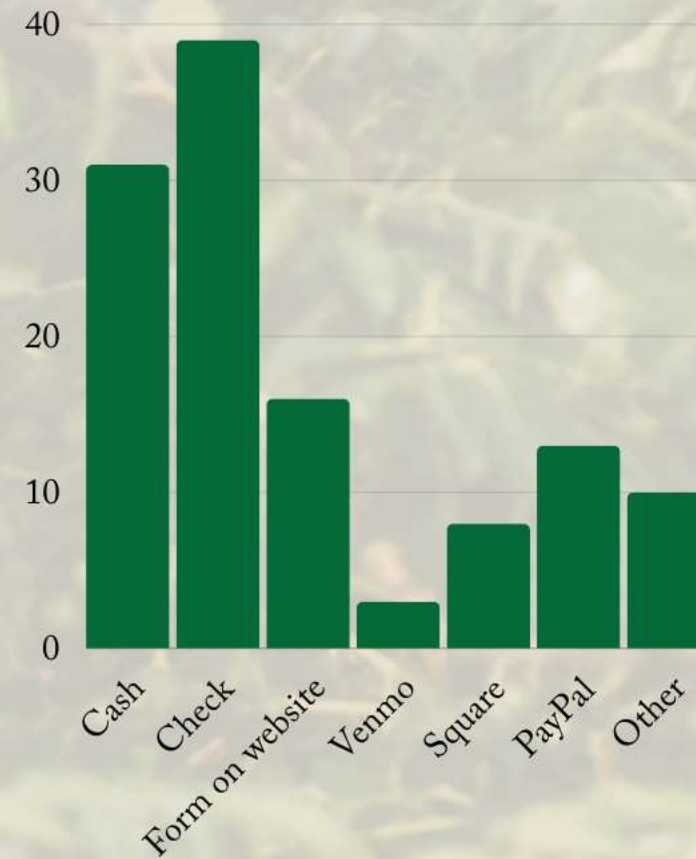


Additional Comments:

- Discounted member rate for couples
- Increases after a deadline
- May need to increase due to rising costs

How do you Collect Dues/Training Class Fees?

Select All That Apply



Is your chapter a registered non-profit?

Select One

- Yes (38)
- No (4)

Additional Comments:

- Zelle, Stripe, ApplePay
- Don't accept electronic payments
- Wanting to accept electronic payments, looking for right avenue

Curriculum Unit Organization

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Top 5 Basic Units Typically Taught in a Classroom Setting

Open Ended Response:

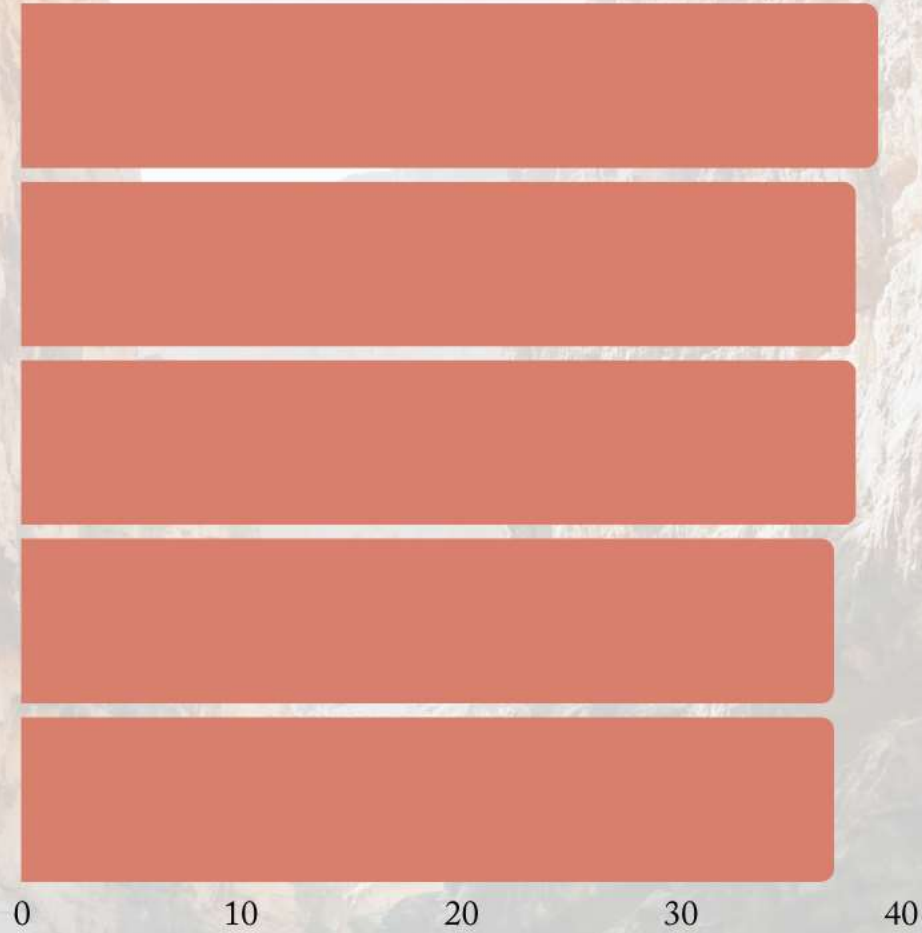
Introduction to the TMN Program

Ecological Regions of Texas

Entomology

Herpetology

Citizen Science

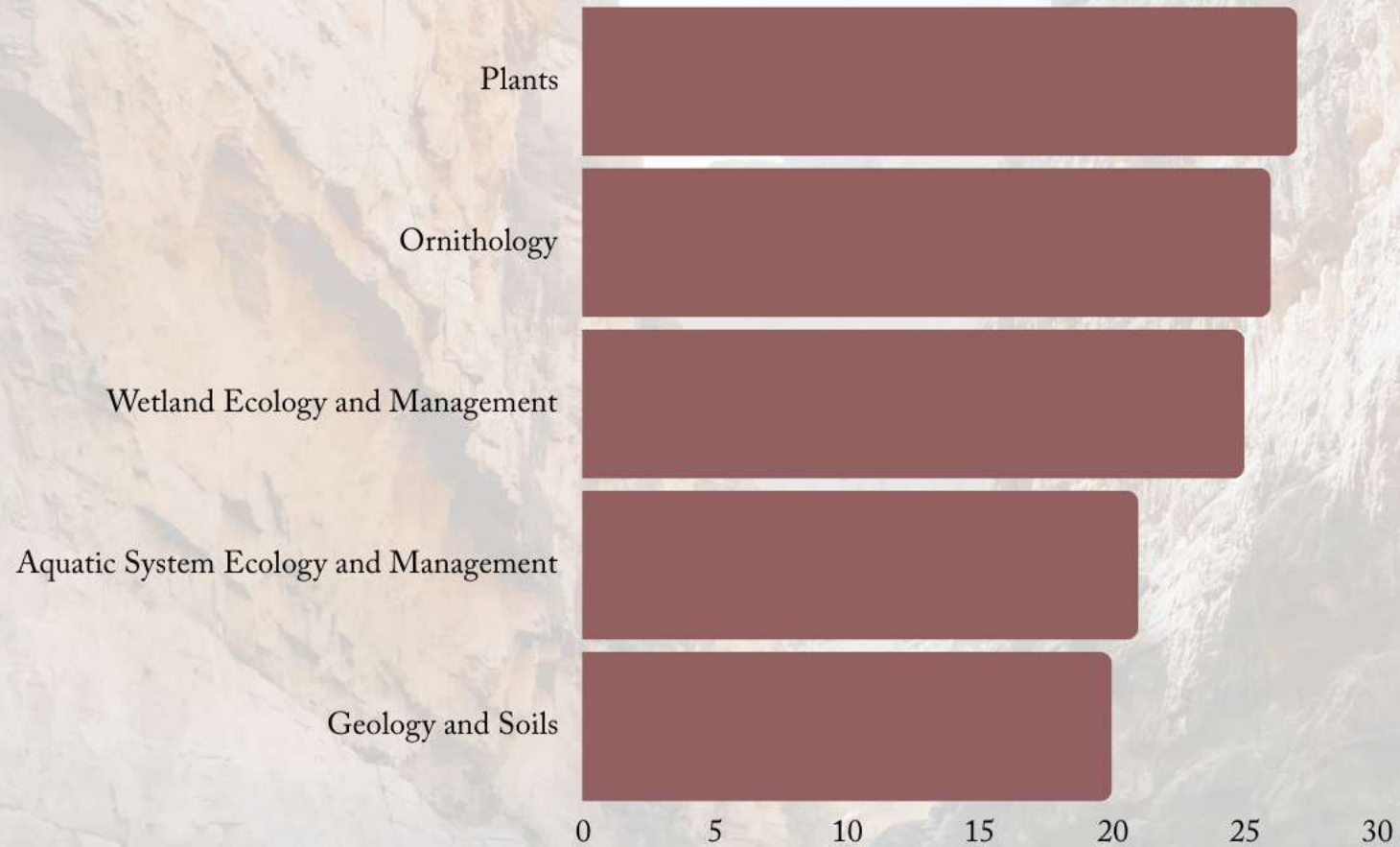


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Top 5 Basic Units Typically Taught in a Field Setting

Open Ended Response:

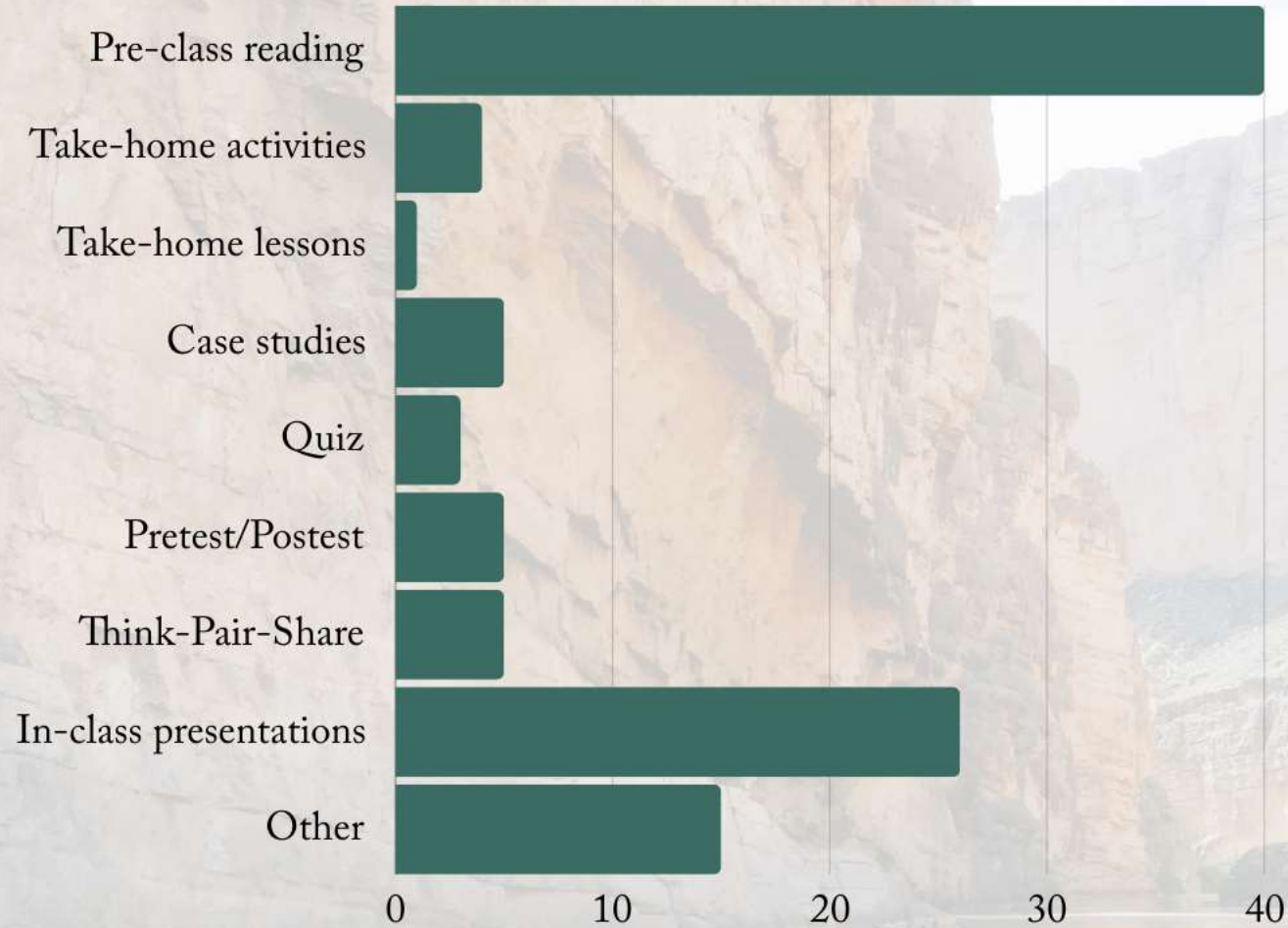


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What is Your Approach to Addressing Curriculum Units?

Select All That Apply



Additional Comments:

- Displays showcasing related chapter projects
- Discussions
- Group projects
- Hands-on activities
- Pre-watching related videos

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New Member Engagement

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How do you Structure your First/Welcome Class?

Open Ended Response:

- **Come and go orientation event**
- **Open with a welcome and explanation about the program, get to know you session, etc. ★**
- **Use it to cover the Intro to TMN curriculum chapter ★**

Additional Comments:

- Potluck/Meal/Snacks
- Games/ice breakers
- Overview of the whole program + chapter
- Meet-and-greet/introductions between training team and trainees
- Intro from chapter president
- Welcome from AgriLife and/or TPWD advisor(s)
- Volunteer fair/chapter project highlights
- VMS how-to/information

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How do you help new trainees build camaraderie with each other & current chapter members DURING training?

Open Ended Response:

- **Class projects/activities that facilitate interactions**
- **Creating small groups/changing seating arrangements to encourage interactions**
- **Host “socials” after or during classes/field sessions to hang out ★**
- **Integrate current members into training**
- **Invite trainees to chapter meetings/events ★**
- **Mentors/mentees or “pods” of trainees and current members ★**
- **Slack/Communication platform for whole chapter**
- **Suggest carpooling to and from events**

Additional Comments:

- “Socials” often centered around food after a volunteer project/training class/field trip
- Combination of assigned mentors/mentees and general chapter members assisting with training
- Many mentions of spending time outdoors together to form bonds
- Creating groups of trainees and current members

How do you help new trainees build camaraderie with each other & current chapter members AFTER training?

Open Ended Response:

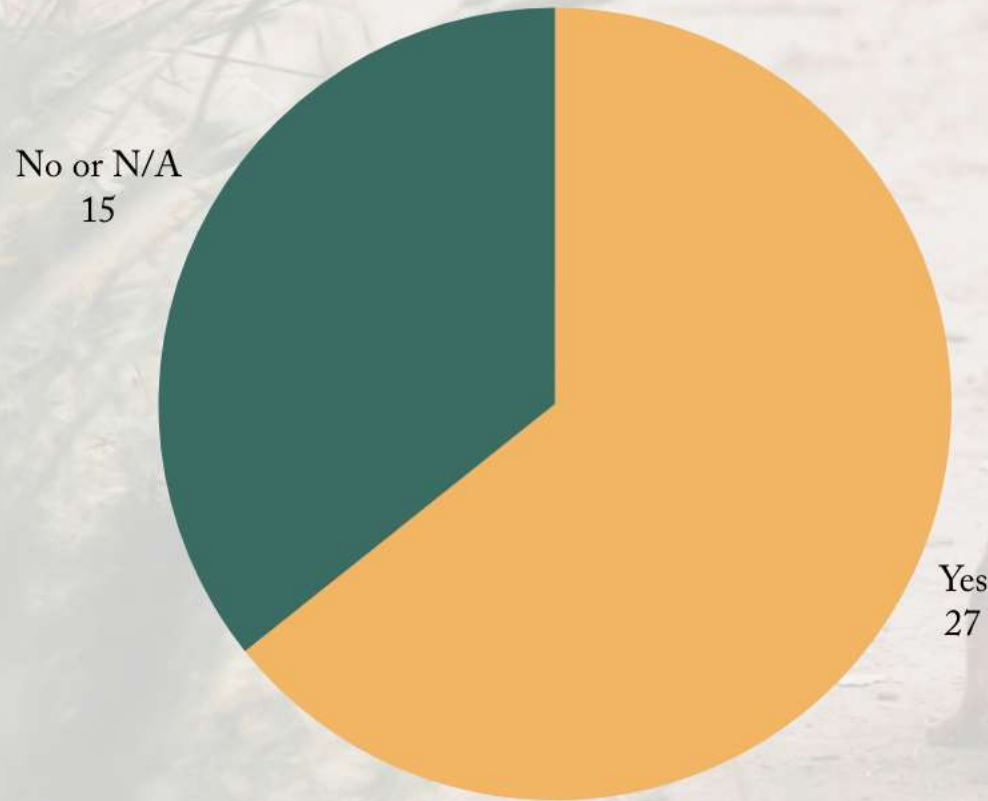
- **Mentors and mentees continuing after training** ★
- **Encourage new trainees to get involved as much and as quickly as possible** ★
- Helping foster connections between new and current members with similar interests
- Host social events soon after training completion (i.e. holiday party, lunches together, etc.)
- Last class/certification ceremony a full chapter celebration
- **Recognize new trainees at chapter meetings and encourage interactions with members**
- **Slack/emails/regular communication about chapter activities** ★
- **Volunteering together** ★

Additional Comments:

- Seeking to improve in this area
- Have a chapter membership directory
- New trainees attendance of monthly chapter meetings extremely beneficial in encouraging their involvement
- Getting them involved in meetings by asking them to present on a topic
- Asking newly graduated trainees to help with the next class tends to be beneficial

Do you have a Mentor Program?

Open Ended Response:



Additional Comments:

- Not at this time, but we are looking to start/about to start
- No, too difficult to coordinate/not successful
- Yes, but it is informal/happens naturally
- Yes, but it is not used as much as we hoped
- Yes, our mentors are part of the training committee/team
- Yes, we use volunteers from the chapter

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Training Completion

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Final Projects and/or Project Fair for Training Class?

Open Ended Response:



- A class-specific iNaturalist project
- Asked to make a presentation
- Projects are displayed/presented at graduation
- Sometimes we have one, not always
- Volunteer fair/project fair to get them involved

Unit and/or Final Tests for New Trainees?

Open Ended Response



Additional Comments:

- A lab practical with 20 questions
- Chapter quizzes, open book
- Used to but caused stress
- More of a review than a test
- More of a “what did you learn?” questionnaire
- More of a survey than a test
- Only if the trainer/instructor brings a test

Pre-training and/or post-training evaluation forms?

Open Ended Response



Additional Comments:

- Currently updating
- No, but we are developing one/want to
- Yes, at the start and end of classes
- Yes, at the start and end of training
- Yes, but don't get many responses
- Yes, just a final training survey

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**Do you celebrate the completion of the training class?
(40h of combined classes/field sessions)**

Open Ended Response

- **A separate celebration from class days**
- **A special celebration and recognition at next chapter meeting**
- **Celebrated in conjunction with other established chapter banquets/parties**
- **Class group photo**
- **Combined with the final class**
- **One big celebration for those who completed the class and those who reached initial certification ★**
- **Serve pot luck/meal/cake/snacks ★**
- **Trainees are allowed to invite guests**

**Do you celebrate initial certification?
(40h of training + 40h of service + 8h AT)**

Open Ended Response

- **Announcement sent out in chapter newsletter**
- **Awards and gifts given at the next chapter meeting as they occur ★**
- **Hold periodic recognition days during chapter meetings to highlight multiple at once**
- **One big celebration for those who completed the class and those who reached initial certification ★**
- **Recognized at annual end of year celebration/party/banquet**

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On average, how long does it take new members to become a certified MN once class has concluded?

Open Ended Response:

- **Hard to predict because it varies greatly ★**
- **Many double certify by the end of class/year**
- **Most complete it within 6 month to a year of their start date or by the end of the class ★**
- **Some get very competitive/involved and finish quicker**
- **Try to encourage certification within a year and most achieve it**

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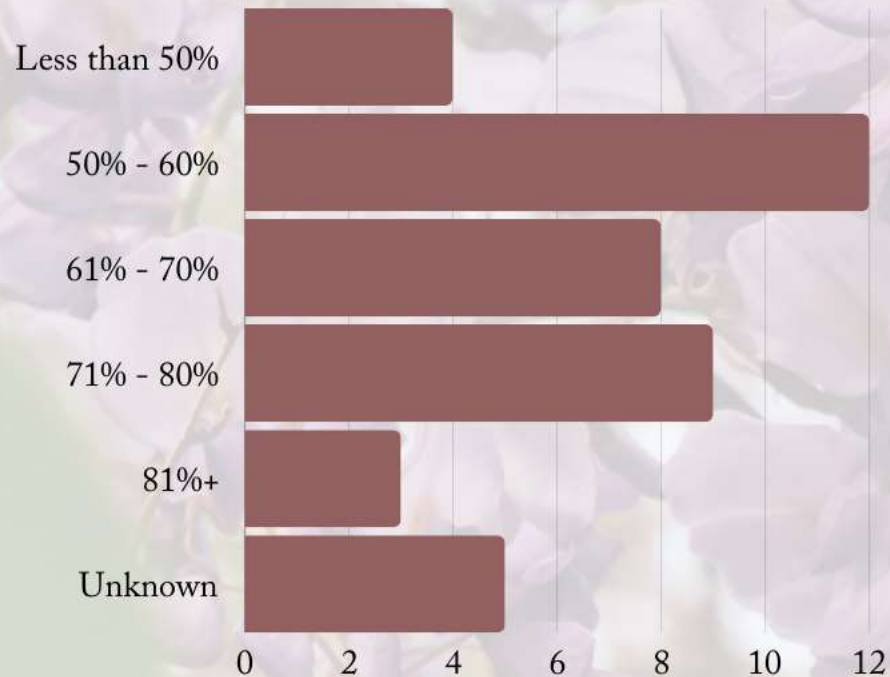
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Average new trainee retention rate in first two years?

Open Ended Response

- COVID-19 lowered our retention for a few years
- Lack of volunteer opportunities fitting interests
- **“Life” seems to get in the way/people get busy**
- **Many members move**
- Some trainees seemed more interested in gaining knowledge than volunteering



Average new trainee retention rate in first five years?

Open Ended Response

- Depends on the person/year/season of life
- **Difficult to estimate**
- Many stay even if they lapse in certification, tend to re-certify when able
- **Often see a lack of retention due to “life” (i.e. moving, lack of time, etc.)**
- Once they join they tend to stay
- Trying to attract a younger demographic leads to less retention due to their life adapting

Thank You

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