

Starting a VMBA Chapter

Supported by remarkable advocacy and organized representation, a unified family of chapters and riders has created a unique riding culture that shows respect for tradition and meaningfully embraces the future of mountain biking in Vermont.



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Getting Started

A passion for riding, community development, building and maintaining trails serve as the foundation of successful VMBA Chapters.

This document outlines the process of establishing a VMBA Chapter and shares information about utilizing the Association's benefits to ensure your new Chapter's ongoing success.

You're joining a special group of people. The individuals managing Chapters across the state are a tireless, passionate and dedicated group of people who care deeply for their communities and trails. These people are your #1 resource as you develop your new Chapter.

Welcome to VMBA!

What do the most successful chapters have in common?

1. Their board members develop an annual plan. Each BOD member plays a defined role in that plan.
2. They consistently and effectively communicate with the riders on their trails.
3. They regularly communicate with VMBA and attend the Advisory Council meetings.

What Next?

The following is a step-by-step description of starting a Chapter. Each reference made to a specific document will be accompanied by a link. These links are also hosted in the [Chapter Resource Library](#) on our website. Once a group has decided to begin a Chapter – the following steps should be taken:

1. Complete the New Chapter Questionnaire and send it to the VMBA Chapter Coordinator. Please advise the office on who is your best point of contact(s).
2. The new group should identify a Board of Directors: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. It is highly recommended to appoint a Membership Coordinator and Social Media Contact. In addition, the group should create a Mission Statement. It is highly recommended to create Bylaws (helpful resources can be found in the Chapter Resource Library).
3. Decide on a Chapter name and [register](#) that with the Secretary of State. This should get you your Articles of Incorporation.
4. Then send VMBA your Article of Incorporation.
5. Go to the Federal Government website, and get your [Chapter a business EIN #](#). This should not cost you any money, it is free, and easy to do. Further, be sure to PRINT OUT your number which the site gives it to you. Make a digital copy and send to your BOD. These numbers are incredibly hard to find after you are given the number at the end of the process.
 - a. Although your chapter is welcome to use VMBA's EIN and 501(c)3 status, you are also required to have your own, so the government can track your income. Our accountant needs this number for his annual filing.
6. Working with the VMBA Chapter Coordinator, sign your [Letter of Consent](#), which gives your Chapter the ability to fall under the umbrella of VMBA's insurance, tax reporting, and usage of the 501(c)3 status.
7. VMBA will confirm and send these documents to our accountant.
8. It is strongly recommended that new chapters learn from the established, successful Chapters. Here some things they all have in common:
 - The Chapter develops an annual (or 2-yr) plan
 - They regularly communicate with VMBA, landowners and public land managers
 - They host planned trail days that are well organized and advertised
 - They utilize consistent outreach to riders on trails **and** to members (Facebook, newsletters, etc.)
 - They host consistent BOD meetings (highly recommended) and member meetings
 - They seek out local partnerships

Chapter BODs are typically split up into five members:

1. Membership/Outreach
2. Trails
3. Landowner/Manager Relations
4. Fundraising/Events/Social Media
5. BOD leadership/planning

VMBA Chapter Administrative Benefits

VMBA has developed a full suite of administrative benefits to support the impact chapters can have on their trails and local communities. Chapters are strongly encouraged to make the most of these benefits. In doing so, they will free up more time to focus on hosting great events and building remarkable trails. Once Articles are submitted to VMBA's accountant the chapter can begin taking advantage of these benefits.

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Insurance covering: landowners, riders, trail days, event participants, directors and officers
- Umbrella 501(c)3 status
- Tax preparation services through VMBA's accountant
- Online membership enrollment services
- Annual membership packet mailing, which can include Chapter specific stickers and/or letter
- Event promotion on vmba.org, social channels and newsletter. Plus, onsite support (per request)
- 100+ chapter member benefits
- Promotion of Chapter on social channels, newsletter & website

ADVOCACY

- Consistent and effective advocacy with private landowners, towns and public land managers
- Legislative and land statute representation
- Representation on the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council
- Access to a united consortium of chapters
- A clear path to public funding channels via district and commissioner relationships

TRAILS

- The annual Trail Building Clinic – normally the first weekend in June each year
- Access to the Chapter Resource Library, outlining permitting, funding sources and contacts required
- Access to the Chapter Trail Grant & Naming Grants & RTP Funding
- Discounted trail tool purchasing

Chapters keep 100% of all grants, donations and sponsorships. The most profound benefit is the collective experience of the Advisory Council, which is comprised of all the chapter presidents.

VMBA Membership

The membership 'season' operates from April 1 – March 31. On Jan 1, the membership sign-up platform will switch to the following season. For example, on Jan. 1, 2021, members will be able to purchase their 2021-22 VMBA Membership.

VMBA base Membership is \$55 for Individual and \$110 for Family (2-4), \$15 for each additional family member.

When joining, each member is asked to identify a "Primary Chapter". This is the Chapter with which the rider wishes to primarily identify.

All members can add additional Chapters to their membership. For example, a rider may choose WATA as their base Chapter and add-on Brewster and Fellowship. Add-on memberships are \$27.50 each. 100% of add-on revenue goes directly to the Chapter.

VMBA will provide the following to members during registration: Auto-Email confirmation, Membership Packet, and a member account.

In their membership packet, all members receive their VMBA Card, Member Benefits sheet, DH Coupon Sheet, and any Chapter specific materials. These Chapter materials (optional) are due to the office in February every year.

Beyond these base membership types, VMBA will host additional membership types for chapters (for example, Fellowship has the 5-pack). These other membership types and their prices must be submitted to VMBA on or before January 10th each year.

The base membership fees are split 50/50 with VMBA. VMBA's portion is used to pay for administrative benefits and feed the VMBA Chapter Trail Grant program. In 2019, 91% of VMBA's portion of membership revenue has funneled back to the Chapters.

For membership types beyond the base individual and family, VMBA will retain \$27.50. For example, when a rider becomes a 5-pack member of FOTW VMBA retains \$27.50 and sends FOTW the remainder as part of their Payout.

VMBA will send your chapter a "Chapter Payout" every two weeks starting in March. Please be sure VMBA has the correct bank account info for ACH.

In addition, Chapters have access to their membership reports, available at vmba.org. Reach out to the Membership Coordinator for further instructions on how to do so.

Chapters are encouraged to sell memberships at events. Please review the [Onsite Membership Instructions](#) found in the Chapter Resource Library.

All members join on VMBA's website. The reason for this is all Chapters are represented at the time of joining and can easily be added – this is good news for you as a new chapter.

We highly encourage listing a [Join Now](#) link on your website and sharing on your social channels/newsletters.

All members receive a Membership Packet which includes their VMBA Card, Member Benefits sheet, DH Coupon Sheet, and any Chapter specific materials. These Chapter materials (optional) are due to the office in February every year.

Please take a moment to review the Chapter Program found here:

Chapter Documentation

All documentation is available at vmba.org in the Chapter Resource Library

New Trail Playbook – Outlines the step-by-step process of proposing new trails on private and public land.

Insurance – A three-page document outlining VMBA's insurance coverage.

Request for insurance – A document that temporarily insures a partner for an event

Landowner Relations Packet (Act 250, VMBA's insurance, 10-yr agreement and Landowner Liability Act)

Forest Parks & Recreation Cooperative

Agreement Recreation Trail Grant Application

Current Annual Chapter Program

Annual Chapter Requirements

1. Regularly communicate with VMBA
2. Submit an annual plan to VMBA in April (trails, landowners, trail days, grants and event dates)
 - a. Chapters are to employ the documents in the landowner package
 - b. Annual plan should include prior year's accomplishments; new partnerships gained and trail plans for the upcoming season.

From a new chapter's perspective, the list of documentation shared here may be a bit overwhelming. Keep reminding yourself – this all takes time to synch up and get rolling. The chapters that communicate regularly with VMBA and proceed with a bit of prudence have the biggest impact long term. It is strongly recommended that the core group meet with VMBA a couple times to be sure all processes are well understood.

1. Board, mission, Bylaws and a name
2. Submit Articles of Incorporation to the state. When returned send them to the accountant
3. You already have insurance, 501c3 status, a membership service and strong representation
4. Your members already have an awesome list of benefits
5. VMBA will remind you of due dates and upcoming grant potential

CALENDAR

Starting and maintaining a Chapter is hard work. The Chapter calendar is meant to assist chapters in making the most of VMBA's support and to make the most profound impact on their local communities.

JANUARY: At least 5 BOD members meet to determine annual plan

FEBRUARY: A lot happens in February

- Did you submit an RTP pre-proposal last fall? If so, your full and final proposal is due on Feb 1st
- Do you need tools for this year? VMBA will be asking for your annual tool order this month.
- Your BOD should finalize the plans and dates for trail days and events – send these to VMBA

MARCH:

- BOD should plan to submit the chapters annual plan and previous year's financial report.
- Send Membership Materials to the office (lookout for the deadline!)

APRIL: April is a busy month

- Submit annual plan to VMBA (landowners, public land managers, trail days, events, etc.)
- Begin trailhead time for board members to reach riders at your trail locations – **time at trailheads = members.**
- Did your chapter plan a membership/spring party?

MAY: Building & riding typically are underway\

- [Reward Volunteers](#) is launched for Chapters to track volunteer hours

JUNE: Ride, events & trail days (sell memberships at events!)

JULY: Rides, events & trail days (sell memberships at events!)

AUGUST: VMBA announces the VMBA Chapter Trail Grant. If your chapter plans to submit an RTP pre-application, it should be underway by now.

SEPTEMBER: VMBA Chapter Trail Grant applications are due. Ride, events & trail days. BGS submissions are due in October.

OCTOBER: Pre-applications for RTP funds are due in October. If pre-app is successful, the full applications are due Feb 1st. This funding opportunity is outlined in the Chapter Resource Library

NOVEMBER: VMBA annual meeting – your attendance is important.

DECEMBER: December/January is a great time to host an “off-season” chapter event (bowling, landowner appreciation events, winter BBQ... anything to keep folks together through the chapter).