

Apply to Lead FOP!

Application Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming a leader for the First-Year Outdoor Program! Since 1979, FOP has worked to provide fun, inspiring, and safe pre-orientation trips for incoming first-year students using the lakes, mountains, and trails all over New England. We owe most of our success to our wonderful leader community. This past year, 454 incoming first-year students (FOPpers) participated in 50 trips led by 106 student leaders across 5 states!

The mission of FOP is to provide group activities that promote the development of social support and self-awareness for first-year students, and leadership development for members of the Harvard community. The central values of FOP are compassion, the equality and intrinsic worth of all people regardless of identity, commitment to inclusive community-building, and responsible stewardship of the lands our program uses. FOP is dedicated to supporting a community of leaders with many different identities, backgrounds, and experiences.

Types of Trips You Can Lead

FOP will run in-person or virtual trips depending on pending COVID-19 restrictions.

In-Person Trips:

- **Backpacking Trips:** backcountry trips in which groups hike from campsite to campsite with packs to carry all of their belongings for the duration of their 6-day trip
- **Switch/Canoe Trips:** backcountry trips that include both canoeing and backpacking portions. Leading a switch trip requires additional lifeguard certification training
- **Service Trips:** backcountry trips that include one to two days of trail work with a trail service professional. Service work ranges from onsite construction to the clearing of trail debris
- **Site-Based & Cabin Trips:** Students on site-based trips will camp in one site for the duration of FOP, while cabin trips will stay in a cabin. Both trips include a variety of adventure-based activities, such as day hikes, canoeing, or performing trail work. Previous settings for site-based and cabin trips have been the Harvard Forest and Merck Forest & Farmland!

Virtual Trips:

- **Climate and Environmental Justice:** The CEJ curriculum gives FOPpers the opportunity to learn more about the intersectionalities surrounding CEJ, as well as how to address the related injustices and inequalities that currently exist in their local communities. You will emphasize the importance of our individual actions and power to act as vehicles of change as it pertains to CEJ. While CEJ relates to the environment and ecosystems we use during FOP, the CEJ theme will be an opportunity for us to reach beyond the FOP

“bubble” and engage with the present realities of our communities’ responsibility to preserve the outdoors.

- Land History and Use: The Land History & Use theme will explore the history of the lands where many people recreate today. We’ll take a closer look at the troubled history of land management and forced migration in the United States and in the Cambridge/Harvard area, and explore the challenges facing Native nations, communities of color, and other displaced communities today. Furthermore, we’ll ask participants to learn about the histories of public lands across the globe by having them investigate lands within their own region.
- Food Sustainability: In the Food Sustainability theme, leaders will teach sustainable farming practices, protection of public health, good employment practices, and animal welfare in our food systems to FOPpers. As consumers, we’re constantly making decisions that have an impact on both our health and the environment. The goal of this theme is to create a space where FOPpers can learn more about the decisions they make and reflect and ruminate on their impact. Throughout this theme you will help FOPpers ~sink their teeth~ into sustainable eating at Harvard, so they can ~get a taste~ of some ~easily-digestible~ ethical and responsible eating practices that they’ll hopefully be able to incorporate into life on campus and beyond. ;)
- Responsible Outdoor Recreation: This theme will help FOPpers gain the skills to feel empowered in the outdoors regardless of their experience or background. Our goal for them is to become an active and informed advocate for themselves and others in the outdoors. You will help empower FOPpers with the skills not only to recreate safely, but to be aware of the context in which they recreate. Topics include responsible use of public lands, supporting gateway communities, equity and accessibility in the outdoors, culturally rich and justice-inspired recreation, and trip planning.
- Flora And Fauna: The natural world is a beautiful place. The hum of insects, the gurgling of streams, the inquisitive calls of songbirds, the scent of soil after it rains, etc. The Flora and Fauna theme seeks to provide a little bit of insight into these sights, smells, sounds, and tastes. Flora and Fauna is the curriculum for you if you’re looking to teach about the outdoors in your community, discuss efforts to preserve the environment, and grow FOPpers’ excitement for nature and its many creatures.
- History of Harvard: Harvard’s history is a story of discovery in spite of exclusion, friendship in spite of segregation, and progress in spite of oppression. Leaders will provide incoming first-years with a brief introduction to the history of Harvard and the surrounding area that captures these nuances. Through constructive dialogue, you will criticize aspects of Harvard’s history, yet also demonstrate how Harvard is able to become a loving home for students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

What are We Looking for in a Leader?

Before discussing what makes a good FOP Leader, we would like to outline explicitly some characteristics that FOP does not consider when evaluating applicants:

- Applicants do **NOT need to have outdoors experience**. FOP Leaders come from all levels of outdoors experience. We will teach trainees all necessary outdoor

skills required to lead a successful trip. Anyone excited by the prospect of leading a community-building trip in an outdoor setting can apply!

- Applicants do **NOT need to have participated in FOP** to be a leader! Many of our leaders did not participate in FOP as first-years.
- Applicants do **NOT need to own equipment or pay for training**. FOP will cover all of the necessary costs and allows leaders to rent equipment at no cost.

FOP is looking for applicants who convey **strong interpersonal skills** and who are **able to foster a positive environment for group bonding and self-exploration**. Since FOP is conducted in a backcountry setting, we look for applicants with a **sound decision-making capacity**. Potential leaders should have the **desire to become comfortable in the outdoors**, but no prior experience is necessary!

The strength of FOP depends on the involvement, support, and breadth of experiences of its leaders. **FOP values having leaders of different ages, backgrounds, interests, identities, and perspectives**. Applicants should also view the experience of leading a FOP trip as an opportunity to develop their leadership skills and engage with different perspectives. FOP takes feedback and growth seriously in the continued development of leaders.

Application Process

The first step in becoming a FOP leader is being selected as a trainee. Trainee selection consists of submitting a written application, 2 letters of evaluation, and, if selected, completing an in-person interview. A rough timeline of the process is as follows:

1. Submit FOP leader application response form [here](#) with two letters of evaluation. (Written responses due: **Sunday, December 20th 2020 at 11:59 p.m.**, Evaluations due: **Wednesday, December 23rd, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.**)
2. Applicants will be informed if they are selected for an interview. (First or second week of spring 2021 semester)
3. Interviews will take place during the first few weeks of the spring 2021 term
4. The Steering Committee will notify applicants about final decisions by email in mid-February 2021.

Letters of Evaluation Information:

- Letters should be completed by people who have observed the applicant in a position of leadership or responsibility such as a high school teacher, extracurricular leader or co-leader, teammate, advisor, mentor, or employer. FOP participants may request a letter from their leader.
- Generally, it is discouraged to submit an evaluation from a roommate or close friend. Likewise, it is often helpful to submit evaluations from individuals with diverse perspectives of the applicant. Please look at the letter of evaluation questions in advance and choose an appropriate individual.

- Be sure to provide evaluators with your full name as entered on the response form and whether you (the applicant) have waived your right of access to the letter under FERPA.
- The link to send to your evaluators **will be released on November 28th, 2020.**

Trainees selected following the interview must complete a comprehensive training process throughout the spring semester, culminating in a nine-day training trip (COVID-19 allowing). Upon successful completion and evaluation, trainees are confirmed as leaders.

Resources for Applicants

Information Sessions: learn more about applying and training to be a FOP leader!

- [Thursday, December 3rd, 2020, 7-8 pm ET](#) - 1st info session and Q&A with all of SC
- [Monday, December 7th, 2020, 5-6 pm ET](#) - 2nd info session and Q&A with LEAF panel, specifically for people with less experience in the outdoors
- [Thursday, December 10th, 7-8 pm ET](#) - 3rd info session and Q&A with panel of current FOP leader

LEAFs (Leaders of Equity, Access, & Fellowship): FOP is committed to supporting leaders from a wide array of backgrounds, identities, and perspectives. For that reason, FOP provides LEAFs to assist students of all identities with the application process. LEAFs are current FOP leaders who can provide support by:

- Meeting with applicants to discuss their FOP experiences
- Answering questions about diversity and inclusion within FOP
- General application advice

Any applicant can reach out to LEAFs, regardless of whether or not they identify with a marginalized identity. In this way, LEAFs can serve not only as resources regarding issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, but also as general application mentors. Contact information and bios of LEAFs are available at <https://fop.fas.harvard.edu/leafs>.

Training

Final selection as a leader is dependent on the completion of the comprehensive training process detailed below, including successful evaluation following their training trip.

FOP expects trainees to be present for all required training. If an applicant foresees a significant and unavoidable conflict with any of the training requirements, please describe the exact nature and timing of the conflict in the designated section of the application. If the applicant is selected for an interview, Steering Committee will discuss any clarifications regarding the applicant's conflicts at that time.

Spring 2021 training dates will be released shortly.

Additional Training Requirements

- Weekly Training Meetings: 2-hour instructional sessions each week conducted in small groups, timing varied based on trainee availability. Some weekly training sessions will be replaced by workshops focusing on specific interpersonal skills.
- Office Hours: 5 volunteer hours during spring term (minimum of 2 hours will be completed in our Equipment Room in the SOCH) (this may not apply due to the high likelihood of virtual training)
- Lifeguard Certification for Switch Only (this may not apply due to the high likelihood of virtual training)
- Canoe Skillz Day for Switch Only (this may not apply due to the high likelihood of virtual training)

Sometimes, trainees whose skills need significant improvement by the end of training trips may be required to complete additional training over the summer or after leading in the fall. Additionally, a trainee may be asked not to lead a FOP trip if their skills are significantly lacking after the training trip.

With that said, once trainees have been selected, FOP is committed to doing everything in order to help trainees successfully complete training. In exchange, FOP asks for a significant commitment of time and effort on the part of trainees.

Anything Else?

- All current first-years, sophomores, and juniors are eligible to apply
- Students who will be on a leave of absence for Spring 2021 are eligible to apply, but they must be able to attend all training sessions.
- The cost of leader training is paid for by FOP. Equipment (including backpacks, clothing, and sleeping bags) can be borrowed from FOP at no cost to you

Applicants who have submitted applications in previous years are encouraged to consider applying again. Many leaders, including Steering Committee members, were not selected the previous times they applied, and have since become an integral part of the leader community.

Inquiries about logistics, especially training dates, the selection process, or requirements, should be directed to the Steering Committee via email (fop@fas.harvard.edu) or phone (617-495-7935).