VOLUNTEER POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL

A guide to our history, philosophy, practices, policies, and organizational culture.

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WELCOME TO LATINO OUTDOORS

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Latino Outdoors (LO)! Our volunteers are very important to us. LO has been powered by volunteers since its inception. You are the key in our efforts to connect families, youth, and communities to the outdoors. Your contributions of time, service, and ideas are deeply appreciated.

This Volunteer Policies & Procedures Manual contains useful information that will assist you in your volunteer role with LO. We aim to be supportive and help make your experience with LO fun and worthwhile. We hope you will enjoy your time with us.

Thank you for joining us.

Luis Villa
Executive Director

Ruby Rodriguez
Director of Programs & Operations
PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

This Manual is designed to help new and established LO volunteers grow and evolve with the organization. Please use it to learn about our history, philosophy, policies, and practices. You will also learn about the benefits and organizational culture you can expect to enjoy as a volunteer.

Please reach out to the Director of Programs & Operations with questions that are not answered in this document.

MISSION, VISION, & HISTORY

MISSION
We inspire, connect, and engage Latino communities in the outdoors and embrace cultura y familia as part of the outdoor narrative, ensuring our history, heritage, and leadership are valued and represented.

VISION
A world where all Latino communities enjoy nature as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place—a world where the outdoors is a place to share and celebrate stories, knowledge, and culture, while growing leadership and an active community of Latino outdoor users, mentors, and stewards.

HISTORY
In 2009, while a graduate student, José González asked himself the following questions:

Where are the top Latino-serving organizations?
What are the top conservation organizations?
Is there any overlap between the two?

The answers to José’s queries demonstrated an unmet need, motivating him to create LO in 2013 as an online blog and networking platform for members of Latinx communities interested in outdoor recreation, environmental education, and/or conservation.

José shared his ideas with participants in this new network, and together they began to grow the community, while also building the foundation for LO as an organization. Since 2014, LO has been providing outdoor experiences to families and youth through its Vamos Outdoor program, growing from a California-based organization to a national movement powered by volunteers.

LO PROGRAMS

VAMOS OUTDOORS
Through Latino Outdoors’ Vamos Outdoors Program, we work to:

1. Provide members of Latinx and other underrepresented communities with transformative outdoor experiences
2. Foster leadership and professional development opportunities for our volunteers and staff
3. Contribute to a richer, more representative narrative of outdoor engagement by diverse communities

LO offers free outdoor activities and supports people who are receiving their introduction to nature, creating a welcoming and family-friendly environment with outings that weave together aspects of culture, community, wellness, and connection. Guided by LO’s theory of change, volunteers craft outdoor experiences that emphasize connections between people, place, process, and policy. The goal is to inspire participants’ conservation ethic and encourage their evolving engagement in outdoor recreation. LO believes these outcomes will arise naturally if individuals and communities have an equitable opportunity to play and recreate outdoors.

YO CUENTO

Did you know that on top of connecting people with the outdoors through outings, we are also storytellers? In fact, LO's storytelling initiative is called Yo Cuento Outdoors, and it is closely tied to our Vamos Outdoors outings program. The relationship between the two is symbiotic. As we lead gente y familias on outings, we create new memories and stories of our connection to the outdoors, and as we share those stories, we inspire more gente y familias to connect with the outdoors.

Yo Cuento Outdoors is a celebration of our ambicultural identities. The Spanish phrase “Yo Cuento” has multiple meanings, including “I count”, “I matter”, and “I tell a story.” LO's storytelling manifests itself in different ways. One example is through the collection of personal stories that you have each shared on our website’s team page. It also happens through LO’s social media platforms and through our Yo Cuento blog. And by simply being present at outings and other events on behalf of LO, we demonstrate that estamos aquí and we contribute to a new, more diverse and representative narrative of outdoor engagement.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING STATEMENT

LO encourages the development of respectful internal and external relationships focused on enhancing our own and others’ leadership capability.

We support each other, work together, and recognize that we all play a vital role in our work towards outdoor equity.

We depend on one another to achieve shared goals that meet strategic outcomes and fulfill our purpose, and we strive to support each other when asked and needed.

We actively build relationships based on trust, honesty, respect, integrity, compassion, understanding, recognition, participation, fairness and equity. We acknowledge that building relationships takes time and requires hard work, resources, effective communication, reflection, and active engagement.
STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

Latino Outdoors strives to make the outdoors a safe and welcoming place for all people, regardless of race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, ability, language, and nationality. This extends beyond our outdoor programming to our core values as an organization, especially one that understands the history and power of public policy and legislation in protecting public lands and landscapes that we enjoy today, but that many times came at the expense of communities that were marginalized and displaced. Latino Outdoors welcomes the full spectrum of people and stands in solidarity with all individuals, organizations, and societies that uphold this value.

VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM LO

- Respectfulness of your commitment, time & confidentiality
- To be part of a team and community
- Ongoing support from LO staff
- An inclusive, welcoming organizational culture
- To be recognized and appreciated for your work
- The right to say no to projects and tasks that make you uncomfortable
- To be adequately covered by liability insurance when performing organizational duties
- To be given accurate and truthful information about LO with relevant information to your role
- To be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses

Organizational culture is a big deal at Latino Outdoors. We support dialogue and openness and celebrate each other as our whole, genuine selves. Openness to learning and improvement by staff and volunteers has been key to our ability to grow and evolve as a community and organization. We are guided not only by our shared vision of outdoor equity, but also our commitment to collective healing and growth.

WHAT LO EXPECTS FROM YOU

- Honor your volunteer commitment
- Cooperate with the LO staff and fellow volunteers
- Be prompt and reliable
- Notify us of any changes to your commitment as a volunteer
- Maintain a respectful, communicative relationship with staff, fellow volunteers, and participants

Our expectations are more clearly outlined in the Policies & Procedures section of this guide on page 8.

JOINING THE TEAM

ONBOARDING

The first step in the onboarding process is completing the Volunteer Application. We also suggest studying the informational resources on our website and 2019 Year-End Report to gain a deeper
understanding of who we are as an organization. The onboarding process can take anywhere from three weeks to six months depending on circumstances.

After a volunteer’s application has been processed:

1. A video meet-and-greet is scheduled with the Director of Programs & Operations during which an overview of the duties of the corresponding volunteer role is provided along with a brief overview of the roles of other volunteers.

2. A follow-up email is sent with detailed instructions for completing onboarding requirements, including but not limited to:
   a. Creating a bio for external and internal introductions
   b. Signing a volunteer agreement
   c. Completing a background check
   d. Activating and signing into a LO online account

3. Prior to the commencement date of the volunteer, the Director of Programs & Operations will schedule an orientation (separate from the aforementioned meet-and-greet) with the volunteer for purposes of:
   a. Discussing the contents of this Volunteer Policies & Procedures Manual
   b. Touring the Online Resource Hub for Volunteers, particularly the following sections:
      i. Outings Program resources
      ii. Administrative resources

4. The Director of Programs & Operations will ensure that LO staff members have been advised of the new volunteer’s name and position.

5. Should additional training be necessary, the appropriate contact person will be advised immediately, and a training schedule implemented.

The following resources are available to assist the Director of Programs & Operations and corresponding Program Coordinator with ensuring that all aspects of LO’s operations, policies, programs, procedures and volunteer responsibilities are understood by volunteers.

- The Getting Started Toolkit is available to familiarize readers with building a LO region from the ground up. This document can be referred to for basic level guidance and support for most outings program-related questions.

- The aforementioned Resource Hub is available as a go-to tool for the most common LO volunteer needs. There, you will find resources for Vamos Outdoors (our outings program) outings, administrative needs, and much more.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT
An orientation is provided to all new LO volunteers and is aimed at introducing them to the organization and to the policies and procedures governing work practices at LO.
Latino Outdoors makes leadership development a core component of its mission. There will be a set of training sessions during the year, approximately every 4-6 months to provide ongoing leadership development opportunities. Training topics will emerge based on the needs and interests identified by staff and volunteers through regular internal conversations. Your attendance to webinars and in-person training sessions is highly encouraged.

**IDENTIFIED EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**
LO encourages volunteers to enhance their knowledge of matters relating to volunteering in this field. Should training needs be identified and mutually agreed upon by the volunteer and Director of Programs & Operations during a monthly check-in or at any other time, LO will provide the necessary training support to the extent its resources will allow.

**ONGOING SUPPORT & SUPERVISION**
Each volunteer has a support person who is responsible for day-to-day support and guidance of your work. Unless otherwise noted, this will be the Director of Programs & Operations, who will provide the most direct support and supervision. Please reach out to the Director of Programs & Operations if you would like to schedule regular check-ins by phone or video conferencing.

We publish a monthly, internal newsletter known as *Aquí, Entre Nos* to remind volunteers of important protocols, processes, and policies, as well as to make announcements just for you. From the Resource Hub, you will be able to view previous issues of this newsletter.

We ask all our volunteers to complete the [Monthly Check-In Form](#) each month, which is a very simple way for volunteers to say "I am here and am still actively engaged with LO." Additionally, this form is an opportunity to provide feedback to LO's lead staff.

**VOLUNTEER POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

**VOLUNTEER PRIVACY**
LO strives to act with the highest integrity and offer the best possible service to volunteers, organizations, and other people who access our services. To provide the highest standard of service to all its stakeholders, from time to time LO needs to collect personal information. Personal information entrusted to LO is treated with appropriate degree of privacy.

Personal information is any information from which an individual's identity can be determined. LO privacy policy and procedures are reviewed in accordance with changes in the law.

**BACKGROUND CHECKS**
Volunteers that will be working with children and other vulnerable populations are required to complete a background check prior to volunteering. Any criminal history will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether it is appropriate for the individual to volunteer with LO.

**EQUAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITY**
LO provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, gender, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential volunteer functions. All matters relating to volunteering
are based upon ability to perform the job or receive appropriate training, as well as dependability and reliability.

**CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

Except when expressly authorized by LO, a volunteer will not directly or indirectly reveal or cause to be revealed to any third party any confidential dealings, finances, transactions or affairs of LO or any of its clients which may come to their knowledge during their period of volunteering.

Volunteers will not, unless expressly authorized by LO, use for their own benefit or gain or that of any other person, firm or company, any confidential information belonging to LO.

Any changes, innovations and ideas initiated by volunteers during volunteering with LO will belong to LO and volunteers must do everything necessary to completely vest ownership of such matters in LO.

All records, documents and other papers or electronic images, together with any copies or extracts thereof, made or acquired by volunteers during their role with LO must be returned to LO on demand or otherwise no later than upon the termination of their role.

Volunteers will not disclose confidential information to any LO employee or any other volunteer not authorized to receive such information.

A volunteer’s obligation in these matters continues to apply after the termination of their role without limits in time.

**TRANSPORTATION**

LO asks that volunteers observe all traffic laws during volunteering activities, including parking regulations applicable in the relevant municipality or state where the vehicle is being driven.

In order to provide for the safety of those we serve, we must ask each volunteer driver to complete the [Volunteer Driver Form](#) for carpooling to hikes and other Latino Outdoors outings.

All volunteers are eligible for fuel/mileage reimbursement with prior approval.

**REIMBURSEMENT POLICY**

Volunteers are reimbursed for approved out of pocket costs, which include mileage and purchasing materials for outings. Payment is reimbursed monthly via a properly submitted Expense Report Form unless other arrangements are agreed to with the Program Director. Volunteers are required to submit receipts for all approved expenditures and reimbursement is conditioned upon prior completion and submission of the monthly check-in and relevant outing/event reports.

Reimbursements will be paid by check 7-10 business days after your expense report form is submitted and approved. Please submit expense reports or stipend invoices (if applicable) in a timely manner as indicated on the Resource Hub.
DRESS CODE
Volunteers are required to demonstrate a neat and responsible standard of dress when performing LO duties. Shirts with the LO logo will be provided for use when performing volunteer duties.

MEDIATION
Mediation is a means of facilitating healthy resolution of conflicts. If direct communication fails to resolve an interpersonal conflict between volunteers or volunteers and employees, the conflict may be submitted to the Executive Director or if the ED is a party to the conflict, the Board Chair, for mediation. The parties in conflict will meet with the Executive Director or Board Chair. Parties involved in mediation have the right to request an alternate mediator. In such cases, the Executive Director or Board Chair will choose another mediator agreeable to both parties.

Paid and volunteer staff members should attempt to reach a solution at the appropriate level. This should involve a minimal number of fellow staff members. If after exhausting other means to address your concerns, you wish to file a grievance, please contact LO’s Director of Programs & Operations for details and procedures. Grounds for grievances may include the violation of policies, unfair situations where no policies exist, and unfair or discriminatory policies. You will not be subject to reprisal for filing a grievance or for participation in the grievance procedure. The grievance procedure is not the appropriate vehicle for resolving interpersonal conflicts. (Please refer to Mediation.)

GRIEVANCE POLICY
A grievance is a real or perceived cause for complaint. You may have a grievance about how you have been treated by another volunteer or paid staff member.

LO recognizes that open communication and feedback are essential elements of a satisfying and productive work environment. Every effort will be made to solve problems cooperatively and informally before presenting them in writing as a formal grievance. Volunteers are assured they will not be disadvantaged by the use of such procedures whether decisions are found for or against their grievance. All formal grievances will be fully documented, and the volunteer’s wishes will be taken into account in the determination of appropriate steps and actions.

All complaints and questions will receive thoughtful consideration in a timely manner and will be discussed with the individual who raises them. Discussions held are confidential.

Volunteers at any time have the right to withdraw their grievance. It is requested this is dated and put in writing and given to the Director of Programs & Operations or Executive Director.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE
1. Mediation was attempted with no resolution or likelihood of success
2. The volunteer discusses issue with Director of Programs & Operations
3. If they are not satisfied with a decision made about their volunteer status, the volunteer submits a written grievance to the Director of Programs & Operations. The grievance is to be submitted within 30 calendar days of the time the volunteer was informed of the decision. If the grievance is with the Director of Programs & Operations, the written grievance may be submitted to the Executive Director.
4. The Director of Programs & Operations will respond in writing within 15 calendar days. If the grievance is not resolved, the volunteer has 15 additional calendar days to submit it in writing to the Executive Director for a final binding decision. The Executive Director will respond within 15 calendar days.

PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

When a volunteer’s performance is below the standards required by LO, or when policies and procedures are violated, the Director of Programs & Operations may issue a verbal warning outlining the problem.

LO has identified two categories of inappropriate behaviors and their consequences—performance problems and serious violations. Examples cannot be listed to cover every situation. The Executive Director may deal with problems and violations not specifically mentioned here.

The following are considered performance problems and are not acceptable:

- Safety violations
- Excessive tardiness
- Unauthorized operation of equipment
- Unfriendly or uncooperative attitude in dealing with program participants, partners, employees, or volunteers
- Unsatisfactory work performance
- Waste, misuse or damage of program materials

Consequences:
1. First Incident: The volunteer will be notified in writing of the problem and the changes required.
2. Second Incident: The volunteer will be issued a second written warning.
3. Third Incident: The volunteer will be placed on probation for a period of four weeks. During that time an evaluation will be done to determine if continued volunteering will benefit the volunteer. The volunteer will be provided goals that must be accomplished to resolve the situation. The Director of Programs & Operations may meet with the volunteer to provide feedback. If the problem is not corrected following this process, a dismissal notice will be given.

For serious problems, steps 3 or 4 may be carried out immediately.

Note: It may be found that the performance problems of a volunteer are the result of inappropriate placement. Every attempt will be made to help them find and train for a more suitable volunteer position at LO.

SERIOUS VIOLATIONS

The following are considered to be serious violations and are grounds for immediate termination of volunteer status:

- Falsifying reports, records or expenses
- Physical or sexual harassment
- Negligent or willful damage of property
- Theft
- Unlawful discrimination
• Willfully endangering the safety of others
• Working under the influence of intoxicants

HARASSMENT
LO will not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying in the work place or in any other venue from which its programs are delivered. Any volunteer who is found to have acted in such a manner may be required to undertake counseling or may have their volunteer role terminated.

LEAVE
Volunteers are entitled to request and be given leave of up to 4 months, and LO supports longer breaks in volunteering, on a case by case basis. Please contact the Director of Programs & Operations as soon as you become aware of a need to take leave.

COMMUNICATIONS

STATIONERY
The LO Letterhead is for official correspondence. Ask the Director of Programs & Operations if you require it.

CORRESPONDENCE
Correspondence relating to overall LO operations (e.g. funding, program evaluation, sponsorship, etc.) are the responsibility of the Executive Director.

Uniformity of presentation is important to maintain a professional image and proof-reading of all correspondence is essential.

Outgoing Correspondence
If appropriate, a volunteer may be responsible for initiating correspondence relating to their area of responsibility; otherwise it will be done by a paid staff member. In some instances, it may be necessary for the Executive Director or Director of Programs & Operations to review and endorse outgoing correspondence.

Incoming Correspondence
The Executive Director must view all incoming correspondence that relates to funding, grants, and Board issues. Relevant correspondence is made available for the information of Board Members.

The primary purpose for access to a LO email account is to assist LO volunteers in carrying out their duties. You will be provided a LO email account and asked to use it appropriately and with proper email etiquette.

Personal Use
Limited personal use is permitted as follows:
• When it is infrequent and brief
• Does not interfere with the duties of the volunteer or LO colleagues
• Does not interfere with the operations of LO
• Does not compromise the security of LO’s systems
• Does not impact on LO’s electronic storage capacity
• Does not incur any additional expense for LO
• Does not violate any laws
• Does not compromise any confidentiality requirements of LO
• Complies with the above and is used outside of the volunteer’s service hours

Unacceptable Use
A volunteer may not use email (including internal email access) provided by LO to:
• Create or exchange messages that are discriminatory, offensive, harassing, bullying, obscene or threatening
• Knowingly visit websites containing illegal, objectionable (including pornographic), or criminal material
• Exchange any confidential or sensitive information held by LO (unless in the authorized course of their duties)
• Create, store or exchange information in violation of copyright laws (including the uploading or downloading of commercial software, games, music or movies)
• Use internet-enabling activities such as gambling, gaming, conducting a business or conducting illegal activities.
• Create or exchange advertisements, solicitations, and other unsolicited or bulk email
• Organize private business, travel or social arrangements

TERMINATION

TERMINATION BY VOLUNTEER: RESIGNATION
If you plan to stop volunteering, we would like the chance to talk with you before your departure. Please give a minimum of two weeks’ notice to the Director of Programs & Operations.

The volunteer will be reimbursed for any outstanding payments in accordance with reimbursement policy and any outstanding property of LO must be returned.

TERMINATION BY LO: DISMISSAL & MISCONDUCT
Volunteers may be dismissed for failure to comply with policies and procedures of LO and will be provided with an opportunity to discuss with the appropriate staff person. Examples of misconduct include and grounds for dismissal may include but are not limited to:
• Theft of property or funds from LO
• Willful damage to LO’s property and public identity
• Intoxication through alcohol or other prohibited substance
• Verbal or physical harassment of any employee, volunteer, Board Member or any other person particularly in respect to race, gender, sex or religion
• Disclosure of confidential information regarding LO to any other party without prior permission from the Executive Director or Director of Programs & Operations
• Falsification of any of LO’s records for personal gain or that of any other employee/volunteer
• Being convicted of a criminal offense which makes it inappropriate to work with children and other vulnerable populations
• Unwillingness or inability to support and further the mission of the organization and/or the objectives of the program
• Insubordination

Immediate dismissal will only take place in the most serious of circumstances:
• The Director of Programs & Operations and Executive Director will advise the volunteer together.
• A written report is to be kept on the volunteer’s file securely.
• All property of LO must be returned and all staff notified of the dismissal.

EXIT INTERVIEW AND CHECKLIST
The exit interview includes questions about reasons for leaving, suggestions for improving the program or organization, and possibilities for future involvement with LO. A record of the interview will be retained.

We aim to obtain information that may help:
• To analyze any trends in the reason for leaving
• To gain constructive feedback on the volunteer experience

During the exit interview process, arrangements will be made for the return of all LO’s property.