Vanguard Program Overview
Trail Life USA

Vanguard Program and Structure

Introduction

Vanguard is an intense service and discipleship opportunity for the brightest and most deeply devoted young men in Trail Life USA. Vanguard is a vital part of the Trailmen ministry’s future. Through Vanguard we are creating a culture and a cadre of elite young men who are on fire for Jesus Christ, who are excellent leaders, and who are passionate about serving God through Trail Life USA. These young men help build the overall organization and serve it. The Vanguard program trains these young men to be Trail Life USA’s future leaders at all levels. Vanguard can be likened to a volunteer internship, or a Junior Commissioner Program. At the same time it is a great honor.

The Vanguard program allows young men to have an actual stake in Trail Life USA in many ways:

- Help run and maintain the local area
- Help lead area, regional, and national events
- Organize camping events for local troops
- Help start new troops
- Visit and encourage existing troops
- Promote Trail Life USA
- Serve as summer adventure staff
- Respond to natural disasters
- Represent Trail Life USA at large events
- Act as Honor Guards
- Engage in missions trips
- Take part in wilderness leadership training
- Enjoy outdoor adventure

These young men are part of a program that is full of epic adventure, vigorous training, and discipleship.

For the discipleship/ministry aspect: The Vanguard program encourages young men to walk closely with God through personal Bible study, purity, and prayer. A Vanguard Unit studies the Bible together in a way that Christian young men can relate and grow. The Vanguard program provides a framework that allows each member to become strongly grounded in his faith and to walk in purity.

Vanguard is a major commitment. It is not for everyone. Accountability, purity, commitment and a solid Christian testimony are a requirement. A level of Physical
fitness is also a requirement due to the adventure activity level of the Vanguard program. All members must have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Lastly, Vanguard is a preservative for Trail Life USA. The Godly young men we raise up will be charged with maintaining the values and beliefs of this Trailman organization. We will one day pass the torch to these men. These Vanguard young men will build our organization much stronger then when they entered it.

Section One: Vanguard Recruitment Process and Training

**Application Process:** Vanguard has a set method of recruiting members to join its ranks.

First, a young man must be a member of an established troop. He must be at least 15 and finished 9th grade upon appointment to the Vanguard program. The first step is to fill out a Vanguard application.

Vanguard training occurs early in the summer. So the Vanguard recruitment process begins in the winter prior to training. Applicants are to submit their Vanguard applications no later than April 1st.

The Vanguard application process is the same for prospective adult leaders as well. Although the training is separate, the application and interview process are identical. All adult leaders must be at least 18 years of age.

The Vanguard application asks relevant questions regarding the young man’s desire to join Vanguard. It also asks about skills the young man possesses that will aid the overall Vanguard program and Trail Life USA as a whole. The applicant’s troop number and leadership position must also be included, as well as his highest level of achievement in the Trail Life USA program.

As part of the application, the applicant must write out his Christian testimony. Because Vanguard will accept only applicants who walk closely with Christ, this is a vital step. The testimony must be written or typed on a separate page and submitted with the application.

The Applicant must also submit two letters of recommendation. One must be from his troop leader. The other must be from a Christian man who is well respected both in the church and community. This man can be another scout leader.

The Applicant must submit the application, his testimony and the two letters of recommendation. Failure to submit all of these will result in the applicant having to reapply or be pushed back to next year’s recruitment.
Recruitment Board: For every Vanguard Unit (more on the Vanguard Unit in next section), there will be a Recruitment Board. Each Board is to consist of 3-5 male leaders of Trail Life USA, and at least one must be a Vanguard officer. These men will be responsible for going over the applications and narrowing the list down to those applicants who are most eligible for the Vanguard program. When they have done so, the Recruitment Board will set up a day or two to interview the applicants.

The Interview days will be held at a central location. Applicants will be told what time to arrive, but may have to wait in line. When it is his turn, the applicant will be seated in front of a table where the Recruitment Board is seated. The Board will question the young man in relation to his walk with Christ, his experience with Trail Life USA, and why he wants to be a Vanguard Trailman. After the applicant has been interviewed he will be notified by phone if he has been accepted into Vanguard Training. If he has not been accepted he will be notified by phone and told the reasons why. If the applicant is accepted into the Vanguard Training Program he is no longer an applicant, but is now known as a Recruit.

Vanguard Training: Vanguard training is required to enter into the Vanguard Program. The length of Vanguard Training will be 10 days in length. The recruits must arrive at training in full uniform. After registration they will be divided into Patrols for the entire training program. There will be three distinct phases to this Training.

1. Wilderness Leadership School: The first phase of Vanguard training will be the Wilderness Leadership School. During these three days, Vanguard Recruits will be taught valuable leadership and teambuilding skills as they are put through demanding obstacles and challenges. During this time the Recruits will sleep in tents, cook their own food, and maintain a neat and clean camp.

2. Wilderness Trip: The next phase of Vanguard Training will be a four day Backpacking trip through challenging terrain. This will be a time of team building and additional leadership training. Every day, two recruits will be selected to lead each patrol. Adult leaders will provided minimal instruction, and allow the young men to lead their patrols and even to navigate on the trail.

3. VAULT: The last few days of training will begin with a light day of basic close order drill to train the recruits how to perform color guard duties. The rest of that day will review some of the basic concepts of being a Vanguard Trailman as well as Vanguard policy. There will be an early dinner that day. After dinner, the recruits are told to get their Bibles, their sleeping bags and some minimal supplies and are separated from each other for the night. This night is called Recruit Solo Night. The following day, Vanguard members who have already graduated and are members of a Vanguard Troop arrive and the entire class undergoes further training and team building exercises. There will be various sessions on several topics.
4. **Graduation Ceremony:** After the final day of training, the recruits that have passed will take part in a special completion ceremony. This is a time of recognition, tradition, Christian focus, and fellowship. The exact ceremony will only be known to those Trailmen that reach this graduation point. Details of the Ceremony are written in the Vanguard Rangeman Program Guide.

**Adult Vanguard Leaders:** For Adults joining as leaders, training will be over a weekend or two. The training will cover a Vanguard overview, leadership skills, and organization. There will also be team building exercises. All new Vanguard Officers must also attend VAULT. The day before the Graduation ceremony, there will be a small ceremony for the Adult leaders as they join the Vanguard leadership ranks.

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**Section Two: How Vanguard Operates**

**Governance:** Vanguard Units are not chartered. These Vanguard Units are run directly by the ministry/organization at the Area Level. They report to a Vanguard Director. They work closely with local troops and the Area leadership committees, but are also available for service regionally and nationally. Vanguard training, uniforms, service, etc. will be uniform across the country. Vanguard Units will report to the Vanguard Director, and ultimately to the Executive Director and the Executive Board.

**Organization:** Vanguard will be organized into two different types of Units. The first, much looser organization will be in a rural area. The second will be more urban.

One option for Vanguard is in an area that is spread out (Rural), or where it is geographically difficult to meet as a Vanguard Unit every week. These Vanguard members remain a part of the troops they originally came from. They meet at least once a month in person and can hold weekly meetings over the phone or internet. Also, they will meet up regularly to perform Vanguard duties and functions. This Vanguard group will still be known as a Vanguard Unit.

Otherwise, a Vanguard Unit would be organized in an area where Vanguard members live in a close proximity and can meet as a Unit once a week in addition to their Vanguard duties. A Vanguard Unit will be set up like a regular troop. The young men will be divided into patrols with 1st and 2nd Officers, Patrol Leaders, etc. Adult leaders will be known as Trail Guides and a Captain will be the equivalent of a scoutmaster.

**Unit Functions:** Vanguard Units will continue to help their young men work towards the Freedom award, as a regular Troop would. Vanguard Units will have 4-5 meetings as a Unit per month, one per week. Two of these meetings will be standard Vanguard meetings. A portion of the standard Vanguard meeting will be devoted to discipleship and accountability. During this portion of the meeting, Vanguard Trailmen will study
scripture in relation to being men of God. Two meetings every month will be devoted to service or planning for a future event.

In addition to standard Unit meetings for Vanguard, at least 1-2 opportunities per week will be available for Vanguard members to serve. These will include service projects to the community, an event to promote the Trail Life USA organization, visiting potential troops, running a local event, and much more.

Every two months the Vanguard members in a given area will head out for a wilderness/adventure weekend. This will be a time for the Vanguard to enjoy the outdoors and stretch themselves as men of God.

Vanguard Units will provide many opportunities for young men to be deeply involved in our new scouting organization.

During the summer time, each Vanguard Unit will conduct a Summer Ministry Project. The duration of such a project can and will vary. This will take place shortly after Vanguard training every year. Each Vanguard unit will choose a project, plan it out and execute it. This could be a local project. This could be a 2 weeks trip to an inner city to help new troops start up. It could be helping run a summer camp if Trail Life USA Areas offer such an option. It could be an overseas trip to assist people in another nation to develop and build a Trail Life ministry similar to our own. There are many possibilities for Vanguard members during the summer.

**Religious Training:** Christian prayer, study, and recognition will be built deeply into the Vanguard program in ways that will be overseen by the Area leadership of the Vanguard Unit, and may take the form of a continued “Band of Brothers” study group. This can be done interdenominationally or denominationally as decided at the local level.

**Further Training:** Vanguard members may also be involved from time to time in other advanced training options. These additional opportunities would allow the Vanguard members to further their training and become well rounded men of God; ready to serve wherever and whenever the call comes.

**Commitment and Dual Registration:** Because of the high commitment Vanguard members will need to make towards Vanguard, the priority for them must be the program. Vanguard Applicants will be aware in advance that the commitment is at the level of a varsity sports program or higher. Vanguard members may be dual registered with their home troop and a Vanguard Unit; however Vanguard must have priority over the home troop. The Vanguard member is expected to choose Vanguard activities over those of his home troop.

**When a Vanguard Graduates:** When a young man graduates high school, a few things can happen. Before anything happens, the Vanguard member(s) graduating high school will be given a small private ceremony. The only people allowed at this ceremony are other Vanguard graduates, Vanguard Alumni, and the Vanguard adult leaders.
The ceremony will be very sacred, secret and special. This ceremony, like the Recruit graduation ceremony that the Trailman engaged in when joining several years earlier, is likewise identified in the Vanguard Rangeman Leader Guide.

At the end of the graduation ceremony, each member will be presented with a sword and a Vanguard Bible.

After 12\textsuperscript{th} grade graduation, the Vanguard member has several options:

1. He can remain in the Vanguard program. This is an option for young men not leaving for college. He can start to work towards becoming a Vanguard Leader.
2. He can be “plucked” for another assignment. Again for guys not leaving for college. A member can start to help lead a troop, join the Area volunteer staff, etc.
3. For those going away to college, he will be given the opportunity to work with and for the College Guidon Program. He will serve as a leader within the Guidon Program. He will maintain his status as a Vanguard member.
4. He can leave Vanguard and go off and serve wherever God has for him to serve.

**Uniforms:** Vanguard members can continue to wear Trail Life USA’s dress uniforms for many events. There will be Vanguard patches / identifiers on those uniforms. In addition to his standard Trailman dress uniform, a Vanguard member will also have a Vanguard dress uniform. The Vanguard uniform will be worn for most Vanguard functions, and for formal events. This uniform is anticipated to be a navy blue version of Trail Life USA’s standard dress uniform. Khaki pants will be worn with the uniform for formal events, as well as a maroon beret.

**Boy Leadership Positions:**

- **First Officer** - Senior Youth leader in a Vanguard Troop.
- **Second Officer** - Assistant to the First Officer
- **Patrol Leader** - The leader of a Patrol of 3–7 young men.
- **Assistant Patrol Leader** - The assistant to the Patrol leader.
- **Quartermaster** - Quartermaster of a Vanguard troop.

**Adult Officers**

- **Captain** - The adult leader of a Vanguard Unit. He sets a clear direction for the Unit. He must be of high commitment and dedication, and must be at least 21 years of Age.
- **Trail Guide** - An officer who assists the Captain in leadership and discipleship. He works directly with the young men and must be at least 18 years of age.
“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

2 Timothy 2:1-7