

Steps to Certification as a Council Trainer

The Trainers Mentoring Circle (TMC)

This is a guide to the process by which a council facilitator can be certified as a trainer in the Ojai Foundation tradition, as conveyed in *The Way of Council*, by Jack Zimmerman and Virginia Coyle. The process is periodically refined by the TMC, and includes formal mentorship, completion of certain council trainings and programs, demonstrated capabilities in transmitting this Way of Council and, of course, extensive facilitating experience.

Since an individual's evolution as a trainer and carrier of council is unique, each trainer-in-training develops a program with a certified trainer authorized by the TMC as a mentor (see Step 1 below.) The TMC is an independent body chosen by the North American circle of active, certified trainers.

Each summer at The Ojai Foundation (TOF), the Gathering of Council Carriers - open to all who feel called to the practice - constitutes the formal meeting of this circle of trainers. Trainers who have been certified during the previous year are acknowledged and celebrated during this gathering.

The circle of council trainers includes more than fifty individuals who share a common commitment to carry council and, at the same time, are quite individual in the way they facilitate council and conduct trainings. Within the shared broad intentions, the practice welcomes unique styles and different ways of languaging. Nevertheless, certain attributes tend to be present in council trainers who are successful in transmitting the practice. These include:

1. an ability to “read the field”—that is, be sensitive to the transpersonal as well as the verbal and non-verbal interactions that shape circle communication;
2. an understanding -- through a combination of education and experience -- of the nature of the human condition and relationship, including that with the natural world;
3. an ability to hold personal beliefs in the context of an open mind and heart, without attachment;
4. a willingness to embrace and address paradox and multiple perspectives whenever encountered and to respond creatively;
5. the willingness to see oneself as a student as well as a teacher in every situation;
6. an inclination to see the gift and lesson in any given circumstance;
7. a commitment to honesty in personal interactions.

Step 1: Choosing a Mentor and Writing Letter of Intention

The trainer-in-training (the “mentee”) chooses a mentor. Authorized mentors are those who have been certified as trainers for at least three years and have offered, in partnership with another certified trainer, at least five full council trainings. A list of authorized mentors is available from the TMC.

Finding the right fit may involve conversations with several prospective mentors. Once a mutual agreement has been reached, the mentee writes a Letter of Intention that includes:

- confirmation that *The Way of Council* has been obtained and read;
- a summary of life, work and educational experiences that have led to the motivation or “call” to be a trainer;
- a summary of council trainings already taken;
- a description of facilitation and other relevant experience; and
- a “dreaming” of future intentions as a certified trainer.

Step 2: Mentor Agreement, Training Plan, Fee and TMC Approval

Together, the mentor and mentee (“M&M”) create a preliminary training plan. This includes new and continuing facilitation experiences, and supplemental trainings beyond Council 1, 2 and 3 that will aid the mentee’s development. These might involve repeat participation in either council trainings, Nature of Council (a long-form residential program guided by council trainers), other programs offered by the School of Lost Borders such as mirroring or vision quests, meditation courses, improvisation classes, story-telling or other forms of group work involving music, movement and art. For some, an agreement regarding a “giveback” or other exchange between mentee and mentor is included in the plan. The mentor submits the training plan and the mentee's letter of intention to the TMC. A call to review the plan is arranged between the TMC and the M&M with approval to proceed given in writing after a successful call. (The TMC meets at least quarterly for this purpose.) A one-time fee of \$100 to support the administration of the TMC, and payable to The Ojai Foundation, is assessed at this time. Payment in installments is acceptable.

Step 3: Ongoing Facilitation Experience

The mentor reviews the ongoing depth and breadth of the mentee’s experience in regard to facilitating a variety of councils. In most cases, several years of consistent council facilitation is required. A facilitator who has led and plans to continue leading youth councils may be encouraged to lead an ongoing adult council—and vice-versa; a facilitator who has primary experience in an educational setting is encouraged to explore councils in a business or community setting, or in the wild—and vice-versa. The M&M discuss this balance of experience on a regular basis. Mentees are strongly encouraged to explore experiences in their primary areas of interest as well as experiences

outside their comfort zone to assist in developing their authentic voice. Subsequent significant changes in the training plan are communicated to the TMC in writing for review and approval. During this step and on through steps 4, 5 and 6, it is highly recommended that the mentee seek verbal and written feedback from leaders and group participants in council and related programs regarding her or his participation, and reflect on this feedback with the mentor. The TMC will ask for documentation of, and thoughtful response to feedback during the final interview.

Step 4: Training Internship

The mentor assists the mentee in seeking an internship in a Council 1 training on the Foundation land, in the field or abroad, led by certified trainers. The internship is an opportunity to attend a training in the witness-participant seat as distinct from co-leading or simply participating. The co-leaders may acknowledge this seat and ask for witness comments from the intern. They may invite the intern to attend their planning sessions before or during the training, or participate in the debriefing. They may require the intern to assist in logistics and may also offer the intern a limited role in delivering an aspect of the training. The intern's role, however, is defined by the co-leaders and will vary from one training to another. The intern is in service to the training. Subsequently, the mentee reviews this experience with the mentor and the training co-leaders - ideally in person and otherwise via phone or Skype/Zoom to determine whether further internships are needed before the mentee is ready to co-lead a Council 1 training. Often two internships are needed before completing this step. It is recommended that mentees intern on as many trainings as are available, including Council 2. It is desirable also for the mentee to intern at least once with trainers other than the mentor.

Step 5: Program Initiation & Guidance

During the latter part of the process, the mentee is required to initiate an ongoing council program in a community, place of business, school or other organization. The mentee's success will not be predicated on how long this program remains vital, but it does need to be maintained for several months. In preparation for this step, the mentor arranges discussions that may involve others, including members of the TMC, on topics such as marketing, pricing, scholarships or giveaways.

Step 6: Council Training Co-Leadership

After significant facilitation experience, the completion of Council 1, 2 and 3, and at least one training internship, the mentee co-leads a Council 1 training with a certified trainer other than the mentor. It is highly recommended that the mentor witness this training partially or fully. If the co-trainer and mentee

agree that the co-leadership and training fulfilled expectations, it becomes part of the graduation requirement. If the mentor feels a second experience of co-leadership is needed, plans are made to fulfill that requirement.

Step 7: Letters of Completion and Endorsement

The mentor and mentee each submit a Letter of Completion to the TMC, along with letters of recommendation or endorsement from those who have been witness to the mentee's path. The mentee's letter is a final reflection and self-assessment, and includes an updated summary of all council experience and trainings, along with how the mentee imagines stepping into the role of trainer. The mentor's letter includes the affirmation that the mentee embodies the spirit and practice of council.

Step 8: Certification and Celebration

A call to review the process may result in certification or the recommendation of further steps to be taken by the M&M team. When the TMC agrees the guidelines have been met and the M&M plan fulfilled, both mentor and mentee will be informed by email, with the graduation celebrated at the next Gathering of Council Carriers. Meanwhile, the new trainer is authorized to pursue Council 1 training opportunities.

Notes on Leading Councils 2 and 3

Those interested in becoming Council 2 trainers must have led several successful Council 1 trainings, been in the trainer seat for a minimum of two years, and interned on at least one Council 2 training. Authorization to co-lead Council 3 requires more experience and a reconnection with the TMC.

Notes on Sister Organizations

While there may be further requirements, including annual dues, certified trainers may explore affiliation with the California-based Center for Council. Benefits include a website listing, and potential opportunities to lead trainings initiated by Center For Council.

Those interested in promoting council in schools and educational communities will find a wealth of information, including lesson plans and dates for council trainings in the Ojai Foundation tradition at <http://councilinschools.org>

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This living document was drafted in March 2006 by Gigi Coyle and Jack Zimmerman and revised by the Center for Council Training Advisory Council ("The Nine") in February 2010. It will continue to be refined to reflect the work and progress of Council in the world.