Leadership Training Programs

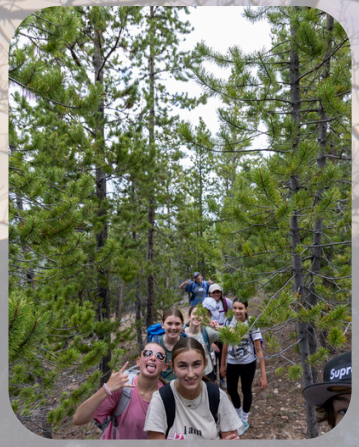
All Leadership Training Programs involve an application and selection process that requires initiative and dedication from the camper. Steps of the application include submitting one letter of recommendation (for applicants who have not completed a prior Leadership Training Program), completing a set of supplemental questions, and a phone interview with the CCO Leadership and Trips Director. YMCA of the Rockies – Camp Chief Ouray is an equal opportunity service provider and employer. YMCA of the Rockies – Camp Chief Ouray operates under special use permit from the USDA Forest Service, Arapaho- Roosevelt National Forest.

Leader-in-Training (LIT) - Page 1 of 2

Leader in Training Summer 2027 will offer one one-week LIT programs (LIT D) without backpacking. LIT A, B C, and LIT F will have backpacking programs as part of the trip, to develop outdoor and backcountry leadership capabilities.

YOUNG ADULTS. BECOMING LEADERS.

The Leaders-In-Training (LIT) program is the first step in our leadership training programs and it is for teens who have completed the 9th grade. This program involves an application and selection process that requires initiative and dedication from the camper rather than the parent/guardian. One letter of recommendation is required - these letters are from teachers, coaches, and youth group leaders and should explain why the candidate would be good for the program. Once applied for the program, check your CampInTouch account 'Forms' for supplemental questions that the camper needs to fill out and submit. Once the questions are submitted, an interview will be scheduled. Interviews will only be scheduled when all materials have been submitted and reviewed.





SKILLS & LEADERSHIP

All LIT campers will learn their personal leadership styles and have an opportunity to lead peers and/or young campers (small group or large) in an activity. This will provide public speaking practice while giving LITs a chance to share something they are passionate about! We hope that campers leave feeling connected to camp community, invested in making camp better, and with lifelong friendships. Mentorship is an important piece of an adventure, so each camper will be provided individual coaching to further their skills. LIT campers that participate in a backpacking trip will learn basic map reading and compass skills. These groups will either travel into Rocky Mountain National Park or a nearby National Forest area. Following their 4-day trip, campers will know the gear needed to successfully complete a backpacking trip, how to plan and prepare backcountry meals, and how to use backcountry stoves. All sessions complete a service project (most likely trail-work based) on property or the Fraser River Valley.

OUTDOOR LIVING & COOOKING

LIT D will be sleeping in platform tents in our Wilderness Village during their one-week program. They will eat all meals at the dining hall. There is no backpacking trip for these two sessions. LIT B and LIT F will be base camping during the backpacking portion of their program. During the rest of their program, these LIT groups will be sleeping in platform tents in our Wilderness Village. They will eat most meals at the dining hall. Base camping allows the group to set up tents and kitchen in one area that they can then use as a "home base" for majority of their gear. Each day the group will only carry with them what is needed for that specific day and return to that campsite. They will be cooking on backcountry stoves and filtering their water. LIT C and LIT E will be backcountry camping during the backpacking portion of their program. During the rest of their program, these LIT groups will be sleeping in platform tents in our Wilderness Village. They will eat most meals at the dining hall. Backcountry camping allows the group to bring on their backs everything that they will need - from clothes, gear, food, tents and sleeping bags. This means that the group can move further into the wilderness to new campsites each day. They will be cooking on backcountry stoves and filtering their water.

Leader-in-Training (LIT) - Page 2 of 2

TENTATIVE ITINERARY FOR TWO-WEEK LIT PROGRAM

Sunday: Campers arrive, icebreakers, ROWDIE Campfire

Monday: Teambuilding, Leave No Trace, pack for trip

Tuesday-Friday: Backpacking in Rocky Mountain National Park or nearby National Forest. During the trip, LITs learn about their personal leadership styles, backcountry skills, and apply their Leave No Trace knowledge

Saturday: Rest, learn more about leadership styles, group bonding/activities, lead Leave No Trace activity for peers

Sunday: More leadership activities, greet incoming campers, lead rules speech for all of CCO, lead a song at ROWDIE campfire

Monday: Service project (generally trail work at camp or around the Fraser Valley)

Tuesday: Prepare for challenger night, lead challenger night (teach challenger campers about Leadership Training Programs and then facilitate a game), dinner with challenger campers in WIL VIL

Wednesday: LIT Takeover day! LIT's are split into cabin groups where they apply their leadership skills during F.O.C.A. (freedom of choice activities), lead games/activities with younger campers and stay the night in a cabin

Thursday: Day hike, plan for teaching talents

Friday: Teaching talents: LITs lead a 15-20 minute lesson about something they have a passion for or something that relates to Leave No Trace principles. LIT's also learn how to give and receive feedback and lead a song at closing vespers

Saturday: Campers leave. See you next year in SIT , EL, or BLT!

TENTATIVE ITINERARY FOR ONE-WEEK LIT PROGRAM

Sunday: Campers arrive, icebreakers, Leave No Trace, ROWDIE campfire

Monday: LITs learn about their personal leadership styles, how Leave No Trace applies to overnight camp, low ropes course

Tuesday: Service project (generally trail work at camp or around the Fraser Valley), assist with all camp game

Wednesday: Takeover day! LIT's are split into cabin groups where they apply their leadership skills during FOCA (freedom of choice activities), lead games/activities with younger campers and stay the night in a cabin

Thursday: Day hike, plan for teaching talents

Friday: High ropes (weather dependent), Teaching talents: LITs lead a 15-20 minute lesson about something they have a passion for or something that relates to Leave No Trace principles. LIT's also learn how to give and receive feedback and lead a song at closing vespers

Saturday: Campers leave. See you next year in a two-week session of LIT or SIT!











Specialist-in-Training (SIT)

SKILL MASTERY. FOR FUTURE LEADERS.

The specialist in Training (SIT) program provides campers who are 16-17 and have completed 10th grade with an incredible opportunity for skill development in an outdoor setting. This program is best suited for campers who have experience backpacking and basic knowledge of mountain biking. The rafting portion of the trip will be led by professional guides; while backpacking and mountain biking will be led by CCO staff. Mentorship is an important part of an adventure, so each camper will be provided individual coaching to further their skills.

SKILLS & LEADERSHIP

Rafting: Campers will have an orientation prior to getting on the water that covers river safety and emergency procedures. The groups will paddle and navigate along the Arkansas River near Buena Vista, Colorado in inflatable rafts, usually around six people per raft. These groups will learn basic river terminology, paddle techniques and Leave No Trace as it relates to river corridors. Mountain biking: Parts of a mountain bike, terminology, basic mountain bike maintenance and repair, along with beginner level techniques for riding. Leading by example, risk management, leadership and how it applies outside of CCO. Backpacking: Campers will learn navigation with map and compass, along with triangulation and should have an opportunity to practice off-trail travel. Basic Wilderness First Aid, backcountry emergencies, and how to keep warm in the wilderness will be covered. Trip preparation and packing, group hiking etiquette, and Leave No Trace principles each day on the trail.







OUTDOOR LIVING & COOOKING

Rafting: The group will camp in Buena Vista the night before their raft trip begins and cook their own meals. During the rafting, guides drop off and pick up groups at campsites along the river each day. Some rafting days can be shorter than others so the group may have time to hike around nearby and/or do group activities into the evening. Rafting meals are all provided by the guiding company for SIT rafting. Clothes and other gear will be stored in dry bags provided by CCO. Mountain biking: These groups will base camp at an established campground in Fraser, CO for 4-nights until it is time to bike back to campus. SITs will bike to the campground (~8 miles) and their camping gear will be dropped off. Each day the group will only carry with them what is needed for that specific day in a daypack and return to that campsite each night. Potable water and restrooms at the campground and the groups will be preparing all their meals using a two-burner camp stove. Backpacking: During the backpacking portion of this trip the group will be carrying everything they need on their backs and backcountry camping. Backcountry camping allows the group to bring on their backs everything that they will need - clothes, gear, food, tents and sleeping bags. This means that the group can move further into the wilderness, to new campsites, each day. They will be cooking on backcountry stoves and filtering their water.

TENTATIVE ITINERARY:

All participants in each session will do the same activities, though the order may change. Groups will return to CCO in between the activity "weeks" to rest, repack group gear, etc. Each SIT session includes:

- 3-day rafting trip on the Arkansas River near Buena Vista, CO
- A 5-day mountain biking trip in Fraser, CO
- A 5-day backpacking trip



All SIT sessions complete a service project (most likely trail-work based) on property or in the Fraser River Valley

Counselor-in-Training (CIT)

The Counselor-In-Training (CIT) program is a four-week program designed for campers ages 16–17 who have completed the 11th grade. Applicants preferably have completed at least two other Leadership Training Programs at CCO (or the equivalent at another camp). CIT is best suited for campers with previous backpacking experience and a genuine desire to work at camp in some capacity. After turning 18 years old, CIT campers are eligible to apply for a position with CCO or Snow Mountain Ranch. This program involves a 5-day backpacking trip in Rocky Mountain National Park followed by three weeks of progressive, hands-on experience in traditional camp cabins, with each week building on the last. Week 2 focuses on shadowing and observation, Week 3 centers on assisting counselors and stepping into leadership roles, and Week 4 gives CITs the chance to take charge and lead with confidence.

SKILLS & LEADERSHIP

Participants will refine their personal leadership style and receive training on some basic camp counselor topics such as risk management, relationship building, camp songs and games. They will cover child abuse prevention, character development, and restorative justice. Mentorship is an important part of any leadership program, so each camper will be provided individual coaching to further their skills. Campers of all levels will find ways to grow and be challenged. Program participants will complete a service project (most likely trail-work based) on property or the Fraser River Valley.

OUTDOOR LIVING & COOKING

While at CCO, campers will be sleeping in platform tents in our Wilderness Village until they are placed in cabins and will eat all meals at the dining hall. During the 5-day backpacking portion of this trip, the group will be carrying everything they need on their backs and backcountry camping. Backcountry camping allows the group to bring on their backs everything that they will need – clothes, gear, food, tents, and sleeping bags. This means that the group can move further into the wilderness, to new campsites, each day. They will be cooking on backcountry stoves and filtering their water.

TENTATIVE ITINERARY

Week One: 5-day Backpacking Trip in Rocky Mountain National Park The group bonds with each other, refines their personal leadership style, and gets trained on some basic camp counselor topics such as risk management, behavior development, simple songs and games, age group characteristics, and relationship building.

Week Two: Cabin Shadowing & Observation CITs are placed into traditional camp cabins with campers ages 7–13. Here, they learn from a variety of counselors how to approach various situations and are given structured opportunities to observe and ask questions. CITs focus on shadowing experienced counselors and observing camper dynamics. They are encouraged to take initiative when getting the cabin ready for the day, transitioning from place to place, and helping counselors assess group needs. CITs begin participating in routines, small activities, and group management with coaching and feedback

Week Three: Assisting & Taking Initiative CITs continue in cabins and start to take more ownership of camper experiences. CITs lead several activities and sessions with counselor support. CITs assist with camper problem solving. Cabin counselors provide structured feedback to guide growth. CITs work with counselors to prepare for Week Four leadership. Service project takes place this week (trail work or community-based).

Week Four: Leading & Taking Charge This final week focuses on independence and leadership. CITs lead the a large portion of the cabin's day-to-day schedule and activities They take initiative in managing transitions, group energy, and behavior. CITs are observed and evaluated by their cabin staff and mentors. This week is designed to somewhat simulate the role of a counselor-in-training with full support. Final reflections and leadership assessments wrap up the experience Other events during the CIT program include a service project, dessert at the CCO Summer Camp Director's house, a half day rafting trip on the Upper Colorado River, and a day or evening out in Granby/Grand Lake.






Wilderness Leadership (WIL)

Camp Chief Ouray is so excited to bring back our Wilderness Leadership (WIL) Program! This advanced leadership experience is designed for campers ages 16 to 17. Applicants must have completed SIT, BLT, or demonstrate significant backpacking experience outside of CCO. The WIL Program is a challenging 14-day backpacking expedition through the Wind River Range of Wyoming, one of the most stunning and remote wilderness areas in the country. This program requires a high level of independence, resilience, and teamwork. Participants must be prepared for extended travel in the backcountry, physical challenges, and meaningful self-reflection. An application and selection process ensures each participant is ready for the rigors and rewards of this adventure. Steps include completing a short set of supplemental questions and a phone interview with the CCO Leadership and Trips Director.

SKILLS & LEADERSHIP

Campers will deepen their understanding of advanced backcountry navigation, including route finding, map and compass triangulation, and off-trail travel. Leadership development is woven throughout the expedition— campers will rotate through leadership roles, make group decisions, and practice wilderness risk management and mitigation strategies. Emphasis is placed on Leave No Trace principles, teamwork, and intentional reflection on leadership styles and group dynamics.

OUTDOOR LIVING & COOKING

WIL participants will carry everything they need for their two-week expedition—gear, food, tents, and personal items—on their backs. CCO provides all group gear, stoves, and food (with accommodations for dietary needs and allergies). Campers will practice meal planning, cooking, and cleanup in the backcountry while maintaining environmental stewardship and safety.

TENTATIVE ITINERARY:

Sunday – Tuesday: Arrive at CCO, participate in team building, route review, and packing sessions. Prepare gear, plan meals, and practice backcountry skills.

Wednesday: Depart CCO for Wyoming. Camp overnight near the trailhead.

Thursday – Following Wednesday (14 days total): Begin backpacking expedition in the Wind River Range. Experience leadership rotations, route navigation, and wilderness living.

Thursday: Return to CCO, debrief the trip, clean and store gear, and rest.

Friday: Enjoy final night at camp with friends—participate in camp activities, attend the camp dance and closing vespers. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for campers ready to take their wilderness skills and leadership development to the next level!







Wrangler in Training (WIT)



HORSES. LEADERSHIP.

Wrangler in Training (WIT) is a two-week program designed for campers 15-16 years of age. WIT applicants must also have completed the Trail Blazer riding level at CCO (or possess equivalent skill level). Prerequisites: Know how to groom, bridle, saddle, and control the horse at a walk, trot and canter. Campers in this program will spend the first week at CCO working on team building, learning the CCO barn, building confidence in teaching, and helping out in the arena when CCO staff are leading lessons. The second week of the program will be spent on a 4-day horse pack trip in State Forest State Park, near Gould, CO which will be led by professional guides. WIT campers will complete a service project during their session.

SKILLS & LEADERSHIP

All WIT campers will learn their personal leadership styles and have an opportunity to put these skills into practice while covering a topic they are passionate about during lessons at the CCO barn! During the first week of the program, campers will spend most of the day at the barn, learning from our Wrangler how to handle horses, facilitate activities safely and improve their own horsemanship skills. During the horse pack portion of this program WIT campers will learn the gear needed to successfully complete a horse packing trip, how to plan and prepare backcountry meals, and how to use backcountry stoves. Horse packing is like backpacking except instead of hiking to campsites the group will be riding horseback every day. Campers will learn skills related to grooming, tacking, horsey first aid as well as backcountry travel and etiquette.

OUTDOOR LIVING & COOOKING

While at CCO WITs will be sleeping in platform tents in our Wilderness Village and will eat all meals at the dining hall. During the horse pack trip the group will travel with camp stoves, utensils, pots, spices, and all the food they will need. Once the group meets their guides, they will pack all of this gear onto mules. Campers will have a saddlebag on their horse for carrying water, sunscreen, and any other items that need to be accessed quickly. While at camp each camper will be responsible for helping set up the campsite, preparing, and cleaning up group meals.





TENTATIVE ITINERARY:

- Sunday: Campers arrive, icebreakers, ROWDIE campfire
- Monday: Team building, personal leadership styles, giving and receiving feedback
- Tuesday-Friday: WITs are at the barn for all activity sessions learning from our wranglers how to handle horses, facilitate activities safely, help campers improve their own skills, and improve their own horsemanship skills. Receive feedback
- Saturday: Service project at the National Sports Center for the Disabled Therapeutic Riding Center (TBD), located on YMCA of the Rockies property • Sunday: Rest day, trail ride, learn more about personal leadership style and CCO barn practices
- Monday: Pack food and gear for trip, intro to Leave No Trace
- Tuesday-Friday: Depart CCO, trip in State Forest State Park near Gould, CO with Red Feather Guides • Friday: Return to CCO, debrief trip, clean gear and shower, camp dance

Saturday: Leave CCO. See you next year!

Backcountry Leadership Training (BLT)

BACKCOUNTRY SKILLS. SELF REFLECTION.

The Backcountry Leadership Training (BLT) program is designed for campers ages 16 to 17. Applicants preferably have completed a two-week LIT program or the EL program at CCO (or the equivalent at another camp). BLT is best suited for campers with previous backpacking experience and a genuine desire to pursue an extended wilderness experience. This program involves a 10-day backpacking trip in the Santa Fe National Forest of New Mexico and a 4-day rafting trip along the Upper Colorado River. This program involves an application and selection process that requires initiative and dedication from the camper. Steps of the application include submitting one letter of recommendation (for applicants who have not completed a prior Leadership Training Program), completing a set of supplemental questions, and a phone interview with the CCO Leadership and Trips Director.







OUTDOOR LIVING & COOOKING

This group will travel with camp stoves, pots, utensils, and all the food needed to prepare their group meals. CCO provides ingredients to meet dietary needs and allergy restrictions. BLT campers will be backcountry camping during the backpacking portion of their program and base camping during the rafting portion. Backcountry camping allows the group to bring on their backs everything that they will need - clothes, gear, food, tents and sleeping bags. This means that the group can move further into the wilderness, to new campsites, each day.



SKILLS & LEADERSHIP

Campers will learn navigation with map and compass, along with triangulation and should have an opportunity to practice off-trail travel using a topographic map. Wilderness First Aid, wilderness risk management and mitigation. Trip preparation and packing, group hiking etiquette, and Leave No Trace principles each day on the trail.

BLT will not be offered for the 2027 season.

TENTATIVE ITINERARY:

Sunday: Arrive at CCO, icebreakers, ROWDIE campfire, campout

Monday: Team building, review route of trip, pack food and gear, intro to Leave No Trace

Tuesday: Leave CCO for trip; sleep at trailhead

Wednesday (day 5)- Friday (day 14): Backpacking for 10 days in the Gila National Forest (New Mexico)

Sunday: Service project (generally trail work at CCO or the Fraser Valley).

Monday: Day hike in a local Wilderness area, laundry, pack food and gear for rafting

Tuesday-Friday: Rafting on the Upper Colorado River, base camping

Saturday: Leave CCO. See you next year in WIL or CIT!