Project Champion – How to Guide

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A group of people standing in a room

Description automatically generated

The project champion will work with the Executive Director of Abilities in Harmony to bring a camp to a new community to help make show choir available to more students!

Year One - The organization will do most of the camp planning and preparations, and the camp will be directed by at least one person employed by Abilities in Harmony. The executive director will copy the project champion into all emails.

Year Two - The project champion will be responsible for most of the camp planning and preparations with close oversight by the Executive Director, and the organization will send one of their staff members to help with and oversee the camp. The project champion will copy the executive director into all emails.

Year Three - The project champion will be responsible for all planning and preparations of the camp including running the camp without an Abilities in Harmony employee present.

This packet will provide specific information of the role of the project champion for each year.

# Receive approval from school administration

#### To be completed as soon as possible.

This step will be completed by the project champion every year including the first year. To hold an Abilities in Harmony camp at a public school, the first step will be to receive approval from the schools administration team for the following items. This step should be completed as soon as possible.

If the camp will be located in somewhere other than the school, please contact the Executive Director for specific instructions.

Gain free use of space – The camps can use any space that can hold a group of up to 45 people comfortable to be dancing and playing games. In the past, we have used gymnasiums, dance studios, choir rooms, multipurpose rooms, cafeterias, and theaters. In addition to the rehearsal space, we will also need a space for the concluding camp performance. This space can be any of the rehearsal spaces listed as long as there is enough room families of all the performers to watch. To get free use of the space, the camps usually fall under the choir program, show choir program, or through the adaptive sports leagues.

Decide who can participate in the camp – The camps can be open to students from whatever area the school administration decides. Our current camps have been open to one individual school district, a county, a region, or anyone from any community. We recommend that the camp is open to a county as there are likely no other programs like this available in the area for those students to attend.

Decide how many camps should be held - The organization requires that at least seven students are signed up to run a camp, and there can be a max of fifteen students per camp. If the school thinks that there will be more performers than can be accommodated in one camp, they should consider holding a second camp. This can be done by dividing the camps by age, school, or both camps can be open to everyone.

Decide who can be volunteers in the camp – No school has ever set parameters on who can be a volunteer in the camp, but it is important to clarify this with them. The organization typically has volunteers that are 14 and up, but this age can be changed by the host school. Past volunteers have been current high school show choir students, national honor society members, teachers, university students, and friends and family of camp performers.

Liability forms – Abilities in Harmony requires every performer and volunteer to sign a liability waiver that protects the organization, staff, volunteers, and the host school from any liability. Additionally, we require every performer and volunteer to sign a media release form that allows the organization to use any photographs or videos taken during the camp on the website, social media, or any other marketing platform. Many districts require that forms specific to the school are also completed for all performers and/or volunteers. The organization is happy to have other forms completed by all participants, and if the forms are provided to the organization at least one month prior to the camps, they can be made available to participants online.

Requirement of a medical professional – Some schools may require that a medical professional is present during the camp. Find out what the requirements are for that district.

Performer fees – The organization charges every performer a fee of $25 to participate in the camp. This fee can be paid online prior to the camp or on the first day of camp with cash, check, or a credit/debit card. Any family that finds this fee to be a financial burden on their family can email the organization to have the fee waived. The school needs to approve that the organization charges this fee. This fee is used to help cover the following expenses: t-shirts, snacks/meals, insurance, camp supplies, etc.

Make a contact with a special need’s teacher and choir/show choir director – Ask the administration for a contact in the special needs education department of the school to help with recruiting by sending emails and flyers to families in the district. Additionally, gain the contact of the choir or show choir director to help with the recruitment of volunteers by sending emails and posting to social media.

Ask about local media – The organization typically invites the local news media to the camps to spread awareness of the organization to help grow the camps for future years. Find out what the schools procedure is for working with the media. Some schools will require that you go through their communications director to set this up.

Approve flyer – Have the administration approve the flyer that you will be using to promote the camp.

***For additional information about receiving approval from school administration, see the “Administration Approval” folder in the Google Drive. Contains a sample letter that can be edited and given to the administrators. Additionally, the liability forms the organization requires are available.***

# Set dates and times for camp and performance

#### To be completed in January (5 months prior to the camp season).

This step will be completed by the project champion every year including the first year. As soon as the camp is scheduled, the executive director will need to be notified so the organization can schedule employees.

The organization typically holds three-day camps that are three hours each day. We have found that this is the most optimal amount of time for the population we are working with. We aim to hold our camps in conjunction with another show choir camp that is already happening to allow for interaction between our performers and the other show choir camp, have a larger performance audience, and increase interest in volunteering with the camps for current show choir students. Another benefit is that it allows for the opportunity to have a conjoined number with our camp and the other show choir camp.

The space should be reserved an hour and a half before the camp start time for the first day, and it should be reserved an hour before the camp start time for the second and third day. The space should be reserved for one hour after the camp is over.

The spaces should be reserved before beginning to promote the camp.

For the performance, we recommend that the performance is held immediately after the last day of camp. This brings more families to the performance and helps the performers have the material fresh in their mind.

Below are possible schedules for the camp that work well:

*Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 4 pm to 7 pm with a performance on Friday at 7 pm– This schedule will require you to serve dinner.*

*Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 4 pm to 7 pm with a performance on Friday at 7 pm – This schedule will require to serve dinner.*

*Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday 9 am to 12 pm with a performance on Friday at 12 pm – This schedule will only require a snack which can help with camp expenses. The timing of the performance can be challenging for working parents to attend the camp.*

It is most preferable to have risers in the performance and rehearsal space. Find out when registering for the camp

# Recruit performers to the camp

#### To be completed beginning in March until two weeks prior to camp.

###### In the first year, this will ideally be done by the project champion, but the executive director will be able to provide assistance. Every year following, this will be the job of the project champion.

**Recruit performers through their school** - For camps open to more than one school district - Start by finding a point person at each school from which you are recruiting to be responsible for having the flyer approved by their administration then sending it the students families via email and through a paper take home flyer. Flyer and email templates are available through the project champion shared folder.

**Recruit performers through local service providers** - Email organizations that provide support to families with special needs encouraging them to share the opportunity with those on their email list. Also share with them the camp flyer. Below is a list of organizations present in most areas to recruit through:

* Down Syndrome Awareness Association
* Autism Awareness Association
* Aptiv
* Special Olympics
* Miss Amazing
* YMCA

Also look for businesses or organizations like these: music therapy, respite care providers, and adaptive sports teams.

**Recruit performers through social media** – Abilities in Harmony will begin promoting the opportunity through their social media three months prior to the camp.

### Sign up Procedure

Performers families will sign them up through a google form that will be accessed through the Abilities in Harmony website. The google form will be available to view for the organization and the project champion.

The sign-up form should have a confirmation message that includes a link to the website for online payment. This will be provided to you by the organization.

Performers should be sent an email within one week of registering confirming their spot in the camp. A sample email is provided in the project champion shared folder.

***In the project champion Google Drive folder named “Performer Recruitment” you will find flyer and email templates to recruit. An email template to confirm registration can be found in the “Communication with Performers” foler. .***

# Recruit camp volunteers

#### To be completed 3 months prior to the camp.

###### In the first year, this will ideally be done by the project champion, but the executive director will be able to provide assistance. Every year following, this will be the job of the project champion.

**Ask local service providers to share the opportunity with their volunteers**: Down Syndrome Awareness Association, Autism Awareness Association, Aptiv, Special Olympics, Miss Amazing, YMCA, etc.

**Ask local music groups to share the opportunity with their participants**: church choirs, high school choirs, high school show choirs, National Honor Society, university clubs focused on music, education, inclusivity, etc., university departments focused on music, education, recreational therapy, movement science, etc.

**Post on websites with volunteer opportunities** (often available through United Way or local universities)

**Speak to classes at local universities and schools**

**Hold a booth at volunteer fair, university fair, etc.**

**Post to Facebook** – Abilities in Harmony will post the volunteer opportunity on their organization Facebook page starting three months prior to the camp.

***For additional materials to recruit volunteers, see the “Volunteer Recruitment” folder in the Google Drive. Many sample emails are included in the folder.***

### Sign-up Procedure

Volunteers will sign up through a Google form that will be accessed through the Abilities in Harmony website. The google form will be also be viewable for the project champion.

Volunteers will be sent an email within one week of registering, confirming their spot in the camp. A sample email is provided in the project champion shared folder.

### Volunteers needed

**One-on-one volunteers** – These volunteers are paired, typically one-on-one, with performers throughout the duration of the camp. Their role is to help the performers have the best experience possible. In the event there are more performers than volunteers, performers will be paired two-on-one with volunteers.

**Director** – Every project champion should find a volunteer to help direct the camp that can teach choreography, teach vocals, and lead games. This may be anyone age 18 and up with experience in show choir, adaptive activities, teaching, etc.

**Photographer** – It is wonderful for the families of performers to get photos from the camp, and we attempt to find a local photographer to donate their time to take photos during the camp that will be available free of charge to the volunteers, performers’ families, and the organization . It is preferable that the photographer attend on the last day of camp, when everyone has their camp t-shirts on. There is a sample request to a photographer in the project champion Google Drive.

**A “just in case” volunteer** – We recommend that there is at least one volunteer attending the camp, in addition to the project champion, that will not be partnered with a performer. This volunteer will be responsible for helping with check in, setting up snack, taking videos of performer solos, help with check in, and most of all, help with any situation that comes up. As you can imagine, there are many situations that come up during the camp that will require the attention of more than just the one on one volunteer, and it is important there are other adults available to help with these situations. We recommend these volunteers are parents, medical professionals, or special education teachers. There is a sample email in the project champion shared folder.

***Additional materials for recruiting volunteers are available in the “Volunteer Recruitment” folder in the Google Drive shared folder.***

# Music and dance

#### To be completed one month prior to the camp.

Abilities in Harmony has a Youtube account with choreography videos. The video links are sent to families at least two weeks prior to the camp with the informational email for performers to start learning the material, if they wish.

Year One – Abilities in Harmony will choose, prepare, and teach the vocals and choreography.

Year Two – Abilities in Harmony will choose and prepare the vocals and choreography. We will assist in the teaching of the vocals and choreography.

Year Three – Abilities in Harmony will continue to prepare vocals and choreography for the current season. The project champion may use any material on the Youtube channel from the current season, a previous season, or select their own music. Upon request, lyrics sheets will be provided for any old material. The selected songs must be free of profanity and any messages about partying, drinking, drugs, sex, or romantic relationships. All material selected independently by the project champion will need to be approved by the organization one month prior to camp.

# Finances

#### Should be worked on before, during, and after the camp.

First year – Abilities in Harmony will pay for all expenses for the first camp. A fundraiser should held during or after the initial camp to start fundraising for future years. If the camp performance is held in conjunction with another group’s performance, it is very simple to do a “pass the hat” asking for money from other families in attendance. At past camps, we have earned $600 to $1000 doing only this.

Second year – The project champion will need to have fundraised enough money for every camp expense except the director fee, if using an Abilities in Harmony employee as the director will need to be provided with accommodations during the camp, which may be a homestay, a hotel or an Airbnb . Additionally, the director will need to be provided with at least two meals a day by a host family or as a stipend.

Third year – The project champion will be responsible for paying for all costs of the camp.

# Fundraising

**Pass the hat at a show choir competition** – Abilities in Harmony has done this at many show choir competitions in the La Crosse area raising anywhere from $400 to $1,200. Right before the finalists are announced is the best time to do this. Contact the Executive Director if you will be pursuing this fundraising method for more information.

**Sell “Show Choir is for Everyone” t-shirts** at local show choir competitions. If you are interested in this, please contact the Executive Director for more information.

**Corporate sponsors** – In the La Crosse area, the organization has successfully been able to obtain sponsorships from businesses in amounts between $100 and $3,000. We recommend that you reach out to business owners that you have a personal relationship with, that have a child with special needs, that has current or former family members in show choir, or has been supportive of other adaptive activities in your community. Sponsors will be recognized in various ways commensurate with their level of sponsorship. Sample emails and flyers with sponsorship information are provided in the project champion shared folder.

**Apply for grants** – Abilities in Harmony has received grants in the La Crosse area from Walmart, Rotary clubs, and local community foundations. This is a great way to get specific needs filled (A/V equipment, supplies, etc.). In the project champion shared folder there are sample answers to many questions asked on grant applications.

**Ask businesses for specific donations** – This is useful for getting snacks or meals provided free or at a discounted rate for the camp.

**Thrivent gift cards** – Members of Thrivent Financial have the ability to request two $250 gift cards each year for an organization of their choosing. These are great to use for purchasing t-shirts, snacks/meals, or to provide supplies to run a larger fundraiser.

**Kickstarter groups** –In the La Crosse area, we have several groups, such as SOUP, League of Ridiculousness, etc., to help kickstart local projects, including Abilities in Harmony. Contact the Executive Director for more information if you would like to participate in one of these events.

**Amazon wish list** – This is a great way to collect camp supplies! There is a link provided of all items that are needed for a camp in the project champion shared folder. You can easily share the wish list through social media and through email to get all of the items provided.

**Bake sale** – Simple fundraisers like this, when done at the right time in the right place, such as immediately following an Abilities in Harmony performance, can be very lucrative for fundraising.

# Supplies

#### Supplies should be ready at least two weeks prior to the camp.

Year One - The organization will provide all supplies.

Year Two - The organization will fill in gaps of supplies, but the project champion should have collected at least 50% of the camp supplies.

Year Three - The project champion will be responsible for providing all supplies. We recommend using Amazon wish lists and grant requests to provide funding for these supplies. See the project champion folder for a list of all items needed and a link to an Amazon wish list.

Required items for one time purchase:

* First aid kit
* Extension cords
* Music player – Bluetooth speaker, CD player, etc.
* Pens and clipboards
* Credit card reader

Required items for yearly purchase:

* Nametags
* Paper for lyrics sheets
* Plates, napkins, food serving gloves, etc.
* Hand sanitizer
* First aid supply replenishments

**Items that can easily be brought from home or donated**

* Extra clothes – It is important to be prepared for the event that something is spilled on a shirt or someone wets their pants.

**Items that are great to have at camp: (again, it is best to apply for a grant for these items specifically)**

* Ribbon wands
* Hula hoops
* Beach balls
* Speaker and microphone
* Instruments: egg shakers, tambourine, etc.
* Bean bag toss game
* Video camera

# Contact local news media

#### Make initial contact with the media two to three weeks prior to the camp.

In the first year, this will ideally be done by the project champion, but the executive director will be able to provide assistance. Every year following, this will be the job of the project champion.

It is great to have local news media do a story on the camp to raise awareness of the organization, help attract performers and volunteers for the next year, and to raise money.

It works best for the media to come 30 minutes before the camp begins to allow time for interviews without distracting from the camp time.

Make sure that the school administration has approved the local media news coverage.

There are sample emails available in the project champion shared folder.

# Performer family emails

Starting the second year, the project champion will be responsible for all information sent out to families of the registered performers with oversight from the executive director. The third year, the project champion will be responsible for this on their own, but email templates will continue to be provided through the project champion shared folder.

**Registration confirmation** – an email should be sent to each family within one week of registration

**2 weeks before camp** – an informational email will be sent to each family with detailed camp information

**1 day before the camp** – a reminder about the camp will be sent

**Performance reminder** – an email will be sent to remind families about the upcoming free performance and provide details regarding time, location, performer pick-up, etc.

# Volunteer emails

Starting the second year, the project champion will be responsible for all information sent out to volunteers with oversight from the executive director. The third year, the project champion will be responsible for this on their own, but email templates will continue to be provided through the project champion shared folder.

**Registration confirmation** – an email should be sent to each volunteer within one week of registration

**One month before camp** – a reminder of their commitment with specific times they are needed as they will need to coordinate with their work schedules

2 weeks before camp – an informational email will be sent out to the volunteers with detailed information about the camp

**1 day before the camp** – a reminder about the camp will be sent

**Performance reminder** – an email will be sent to remind volunteers to invite friends and family to the upcoming free performance

# Camp structure

The Abilities in Harmony camps have a flexible structure as it is challenging to predict they dynamics and interests of the individuals participating. The most important thing to remember is that you need to adapt and be willing to modify the plan at any time. We recommend that one song is learned per camp day. Below is a rundown of the schedule we feel works best for the camps:

Check in – There should be one person to check in for every six performers registered for the camp. Each check in volunteer will be responsible for a certain section of the alphabet. The check in person will:

1. Collect performer fees
2. Have the liability waivers signed by performers and volunteers
3. Confirm emergency contact information
4. Inquire about performer allergies
5. Ask if there is any additional information we should know about the performer
6. Distribute t-shirts to volunteers and the person dropping off each performer
7. Match each performer with a volunteer
8. Find out who will be picking up each performer

Welcome circle **(5 to 15 minutes)** – Every performer and volunteer should introduce themselves, say their age, and share something fun about themselves (favorite song to dance to, favorite singer, etc.)

Warm up dance **(5 minutes)** – Lead a dance to a song with universal choreography: macerana, chicken dance, cupid shuffle, etc.

Listen to music and begin learning vocals **(15 minutes)** – Vocals will be taught using the call and response method. Performers will sit with their volunteers in a circle on the floor, and every pair should have a lyrics sheet.

Begin learning choreography **(15 minutes)**

Solos **(20 minutes)** – Each performer will have at least one chance (depending on the size of the camp) to do a solo on stage with the other performers and volunteers as their audience. This can be a singing solo, dancing solo, duet with their volunteer or another performer, or a dance party for the whole group to a song of their choice.

* It is best to have the performers sign up for their spot at the beginning of each camp day to avoid confusion over who will perform next.
* All songs should be clean (no swearing, no reference to drugs, sex, partying, etc.) You will need to have someone that can proof the music in advance.
* Limit each performer to 90 seconds to 2 minutes of their selected song.
* If there is a video camera available, we record these solos to share with families after the camp.

Play a game **(15 minutes)** – We have a list of many different games and activities that can be played during the camp. In the project champion shared folder there is a list with directions and descriptions of every game. We do not allow the playing of duck duck goose, tag, any running games, or hide and seek.

Snack/meal **(15 minutes for snack, 30 minutes for a meal)**

Free dance time **(10 minutes)** – We have a playlist of songs on Spotify that have been our performers’ favorites. A link to this playlist is provided in the project champion shared folder.

Review vocals **(15 minutes)**

Teach choreography **(15 minutes)**

Solos **(20 minutes)**

Play a game **(10 minutes)**

Review choreography **(15 minutes)**

Free dance time **(until the end of camp)**

Check out **– each volunteer will be required to stay with the performer until they are picked up then the volunteer will need to check in with the project champion to confirm their performer has been picked up**

# Performance

The performance can be just for Abilities in Harmony or be together with other choirs or show choirs.

The following will need to be coordinated for the performance:

* **Someone to run the music** – if in a theater, it is best to contact the choir director at least two weeks prior to the camp to find someone to do this
* **Volunteers to sell t-shirts and collect donations in a pass the hat or after the performance**
* **A volunteer to record the performance**
* **Invite sponsors to the performance** – Sample emails and letters are in the project champion shared folder – two weeks prior to the camp

# Post camp

#### To be completed within two weeks after camp is over.

Send an email to families and volunteers with the photos and videos taken of the camp

* Include surveys for families and volunteers – surveys are available in the project champion shared folder

Send a thank you to sponsors that includes photos from the camp – sample emails are in the project champion shared folder