
How to Build a Local Training Operation

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HOW TO BUILD A LOCAL TRAINING OPERATION

@ARMYOURFRIENDS

If you want to build a training operation in your city, you are in the right place.

If you are here because you want to have an operation that simply copies what Arm Your Friends does in Houston, this guide is not for you.

Why We Do Not Have Chapters Outside of Texas

Arm Your Friends is a Houston-based training group. We do not currently have plans to build chapters outside of Texas or to 'franchise' this work. Our focus is on keeping our operations high quality and sustainable in our own area while helping others learn from what we have done so they can organize in their own communities.

There was a time when Arm Your Friends experimented with chapters. We thought a formal structure might bring clarity, consistency, and growth. What we found is that due to the nature of our organizing, a mission like this is extremely prone to infiltration by bad faith actors in regions beyond your local area. These individuals will distract, create conflict, and burn out your team even if they appear enthusiastic at first.

We are not here for titles or empty structures. We are here to train people and build infrastructure that lasts.

The Risk of Centralization

When an organization is too centralized, collapse is contagious. One inactive leader can cause others to go quiet. A conflict at the top can pull everyone's focus away from the mission. When everything flows through a single point of failure, burnout spreads quickly.

Instead of building a fragile system that needs constant maintenance, dues collection, and gatekeeping to survive, we believe in a decentralized network of local operations focused on training and connection.

The Problem with Chapters and Dues

A national chapter structure needs infrastructure. Infrastructure needs money. So you start collecting dues. Then you need to prove those dues are doing something, which means writing budgets, justifying staff, and maybe chasing large donors or investors to stay afloat.

At that point you have built a policy-driven nonprofit, not a movement.

Most people do not want to wait years to see their dues go toward something tangible. They want training, connection, and community now.

What Actually Works: Local Training Hubs

Small, nimble local operations work best. They start with one or two people and grow with consistency and purpose.

Every successful local operation we have seen includes three key competencies:

1. **Licensed Instructor(s)** – Certified, insured, and qualified to teach safely and legally. It is absolutely worth it to go out and get formal NRA Instructor Certifications if you plan to do this work long term. It's not about the NRA, it's about the doors that formal certification and paperwork can open on behalf of people that can't do it themselves.
2. **The Organizer** – Manages schedules, coordinates events, builds relationships, and serves as the welcoming face of the group.
3. **The Support Tech** – Knows the local ranges, tracks supplies, manages communications (Signal, Discord, etc.), and runs digital infrastructure like social pages and event invites.

In the beginning one person may fill all three roles. It will be difficult at first, but once people start showing up and your name spreads, the work will be shared.

The Arm Your Friends Training Model

We focus on meeting people where they are, not where we wish they were. Our method moves people from non-firearm owner to capable intermediate shooter through our 4-class plus range day system:

1. **Safety Fundamentals**
 2. **Basics of Pistol Shooting**
 3. **Basics of Rifle Shooting**
 4. **Intermediate Pistol Shooting**
 5. **Intermediate Rifle Shooting**
 6. **Stop the Bleed** (critical trauma care basics)
 7. Graduates of this sequence have the skills to be an asset to their community in emergencies and defensive situations.
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Vetting Attendees

The best way we have found to avoid bad actors is to require all sign-ups to go through a **digital payment or registration processor**. This creates a paper trail and ensures attendees are real people.

If your group needs a more covert approach, that is your decision, but our method keeps us transparent, accountable, and safe.

Social Media and Outreach

Go to people where they are. Right now, that is online.

- Social media is **free advertising**.
- In five years we have spent **\$45 total** on paid ads with no real success.
- Every student we have trained came from **word of mouth, likes, shares, and direct messages**.

Post regularly. Share photos and video (with consent). Tell stories about student progress. Ask your network to send your posts directly to people who would benefit.

Warnings and Real Talk

- Stay away from the career 'anti-establishmentarians' who treat any level of organization as an establishment in need of disruption. These people will destroy any momentum you build.
- Stay away from people with delusions of grandeur or those who are not mentally well enough to keep up with the demands of organizing. This work requires mental stability, social discipline, and the ability to follow through.

All of this is free advice. Treat it as such.

Arm Your Friends was started by a group of 22- and 23-year-olds in 2020 who had to learn everything the hard way. You do not have to listen to me. You do not even have to read this guide. I am writing it for the one out of one hundred of you who are actually serious about this mission and this work.

Common Questions from New Organizers

Q: What if I cannot find a certified instructor?

Partner with a local instructor and offer to handle promotion and logistics in exchange for their expertise.

Q: How big should my first class be?

Start small with 4 to 6 people to keep it safe and manageable.

Q: How do I keep people coming back?

Offer a clear training progression and a "next step" after each class so it becomes part of their lifestyle.

If You Are Already Organizing

If you are already moving in your city, here is how to formalize your work:

- Pick a simple, local name (Example: ACTIVE – Las Vegas)
 - Create a recurring event schedule
 - Build a basic social landing page
 - Document your work with photos and video
 - Draft a training plan with clear skill progression
 - Invite people selectively and build trust
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You Do Not Need Permission

You do not need a chapter badge to make your community safer.

You do not need central leadership to tell you when and where to train.

You do not need dues, investors, or endless bureaucracy.

You need infrastructure, commitment, and consistency.

You need a plan, a partner, and persistence.

That is how this spreads. That is how it sticks.

Need Help?

If you're trying to start something and don't know where to begin, email me directly:

 support@armyourfriends.com

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