



SWENext Club 101 Guide

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Introduction

This guide prepares SWENext Club Counselors for their roles, which are critical to the success and sustainability of their clubs. Each section outlines what to expect, from starting a club to evaluating it.

What is a SWENext Club?

SWENext Clubs connect SWE members, SWENexters, and students in your local community. A SWENext Club can be any size and may serve primary or secondary school students. Clubs can be started by anyone, anywhere, and may operate independently or in partnership with schools or organizations.

Why are Club Counselors important?

Club Counselors play a critical role in supporting and guiding SWENext Clubs. Each club includes:

- Students (precollege members)
- Club Counselors (adult advocates and advisors)

While roles may vary by club, counselors are expected to guide students, support decision-making, and ensure a safe and structured environment. Clubs may have up to three counselors, however, one must be designated as the primary counselor and maintain paid SWE membership.



Roles and Responsibilities

Club Counselors are the main connection between SWE and their club. Key responsibilities include:

- Serve as the Main Point of Contact
 - All communications (e.g., funding, activities, club requirements, etc.) from SWE Headquarters are sent to the primary club counselor.
 - Counselors are responsible for communicating among themselves and with their club members.
 - The primary counselor is the default public contact email, unless an alternative email is provided.
- Connect with Your Local SWE Section/Affiliate
 - Counselors are encouraged to connect with their local SWE section or affiliate to support student networking, co-host events, identify mentors, and more.
- Mentor and Advise Students
 - Support the development of a student leadership team.
 - Provide structure (e.g., regular meetings) and support students in goal setting and planning.

Club Counselor Expectations

Club Counselors must follow the [SWE Youth Protection Policy](#), honor and promote [SWE's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging \(DEI&B\) principles](#), and adhere to [SWE's core values](#). Counselors are responsible for upholding these standards and modeling appropriate behavior to ensure that SWENext Clubs offer an inclusive and positive experience for students, parents/guardians, and advocates supporting STEM learning. Club Counselors are encouraged to reflect upon and call back to these policies to cultivate a healthy club culture. Should conflicts arise, the below scenarios will help guide Club Counselors in navigating different situations.

- **Counselor-to-Counselor:** If there is an issue between club counselors, attempt to resolve the conflict directly. If all attempts to resolve the issue have failed and the situation threatens to escalate, contact SWE for support or mediation.
- **Counselor-to-Student:** Report any violations of the Youth Protection Policy to SWE immediately. SWE takes these matters seriously. In the case of suspected abuse or neglect of a youth or violations of the Standards for Interacting with Youth, the Society will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action. Actions taken will first and foremost consider the need to ensure the safety of youth participating in the program.
- **Student-to-Student:** If an issue arises between students, it is the counselor's responsibility to step in if the issue escalates beyond students' control or if a student requests support. Not all student conflicts need to be resolved by the Club Counselor. Being present, unbiased, and supportive is the best approach to create a safe space for open communication among students. Most importantly, counselors should model respectful conflict resolution and maintain a safe environment.



Starting A SWENext Club

Application Process

A SWENext Club application may be submitted by a club counselor or student. Review the [online application](#) to see the required fields and collect the information in advance as the application must be completed in one sitting.

- **Requirements:** To apply, clubs must have:
 - A primary counselor (educator, parent/guardian, collegian/professional, organization leader, advocate) with any level of SWE membership
 - All required application information
- **Approval Timeline:** Applications are typically reviewed within four weeks of submission. You will receive:
 - An official approval and welcome email including the club's ID number.
 - An email explaining why the application was rejected and next steps.

Before contacting SWE Headquarters, please ensure that the primary counselor's contact information is accurate and they are checking for SWE communications on behalf of the club.

- **SWENext Club ID:** Each club receives a unique club ID. Please share the club ID number with all club members and counselors.
 - SWE will track all clubs and communications by club ID.
 - Clubs must reference their ID number in all correspondence with SWE.
 - The club ID does not replace the SWENext Club name. Clubs will keep and use a club name.

Recruiting Club Members

Clubs do not need a large number of members to get started. If recruitment is a challenge, consider connecting with:

- Local schools
- STEM organizations (e.g., FIRST Robotics, Robotics Education and Competition Foundation (VEX), WiSTEM)
- Youth organizations (e.g., Girl Scouts, Girls, Inc., YWCA, 4-H)
- Libraries and community centers
- Local SWE Sections and Affiliates

Club Models

SWENext Clubs can be structured in different ways depending on your community, resources, and goals.

- **School-based:** Clubs may focus on any grade level or multiple grade levels. Partner with educators or administrators and invite them to serve in a Club Counselor role. Many schools require that a faculty member be connected to the club.
- **Youth organization partnerships:** Clubs may be formed in partnership with local youth organizations such as Girl Scouts or FIRST robotics. This approach allows for existing groups to join the SWE network by registering as a SWENext Club.
- **Virtual:** While SWENext Clubs focus on providing local and in-person connection and activities, take advantage of digital tools to organize virtual club recruitment meetings. Invite parents/guardians, advocates, educators, and students to learn how they can get involved in SWENext.



Maintaining Club Activities and Outreach Events

Once your club is established, focus on maintaining consistent engagement and meeting program requirements.

Minimum requirements:

- One club event each year
- Four general club meetings within an academic year
- Student leadership team with at least three designated roles

Follow these suggested practices to grow engagement and multiply your club's impact.

- Establish a regular meeting schedule (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc.)
- Define a clear club structure and leadership roles, such as president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer
- Incorporate STEM-related activities, team building, and networking during meetings
- Visit the STEM Pathways digital library for hands-on activity ideas across a variety of engineering disciplines
- Participate in community outreach and volunteer activities to promote SWENext
- Explore [SWENext Club Resources](#) and the [Outreach Toolkit](#), which includes guides and templates to successfully organize events
- Connect with other SWENext Clubs using the SWENext Club directory
- Build connections with SWE Sections and Affiliates. Introduce your club and attend their events as a club.

For Club Counselors:

- Engage with your local SWE Section or Affiliate
- Explore opportunities to host larger events (e.g., expos or mini-conferences)
- Stay informed through SWE newsletters and check the [event calendar](#) for upcoming opportunities
- Complete relevant training through [SWE's Advance Learning Center](#)

Succession Planning and Club Growth

Sustaining your club year-to-year requires intentional planning. Consider the following to help sustain club growth.

- Create a leadership transition plan
- Refresh the club's goals each year. If the club's focus no longer reflects what members want to do, update your goals to energize and connect with members.
- Recruit additional counselors or adult advocates, as needed
- Download and review the [SWENext Train the Trainer guide](#) to learn how to support and onboard other counselors
- Larger events and projects may need more adult or parental support. For any event that will include outside support, follow our [guideline for adult volunteers for events](#).
- Collaborate or partner with nearby clubs.



Annual Check-In

Each year, clubs must complete the annual check-in to confirm their active status, update club information, and share feedback and experiences. The check-in form is sent to club counselors in April/May. To stay active, clubs must:

- Have a Primary Club Counselor with an active SWE membership
- Ensure all counselors complete the Youth Protection (every three years)
- Meet the SWENext Club activity requirements

SWENext Clubs that do not meet these requirements are considered inactive and will not be eligible for grants, funding, or awards until reactivated. This includes applications for SWE Program Development Grants where the club is a listed awardee and applicant.

Funding Resources

SWENext Club Microgrant

Consider applying for the SWENext Club Microgrant, which is open on a rolling basis each year. Clubs can apply once a year and receive up to \$1,000 to fund general club activities, events, outreach, branded materials, and more. [Visit the website](#) to access the application and find more details.

SWENext Club Counselor Grant

For counselors experiencing financial barriers to SWE membership, SWE offers the SWENext Club Counselor Grant to cover the cost of a SWE Educator Membership for one year. The most up-to-date information and details on eligibility and how to apply will be available on the [SWENext Clubs webpage](#). This grant is rewarded in the form of a discount code, not a refund. Prospective applicants must apply before they purchase or renew SWE membership.

Program Development Grants

Program Development Grants (PDGs) provide funding to support larger, strategic outreach events and initiatives. SWENext Clubs are not eligible to apply independently, but they may partner with a SWE Section or Affiliate to submit a PDG application and receive funding. [Visit the website](#) to review eligibility criteria, requirements, and deadlines.