

Activity Standards Design Collaborative

Purpose of this document: The purpose of this document is to define and invite participation in the Activity Standards Design Lab, a volunteer-and-staff process for creating one shared foundation for Activity Levels 1 and 2 across AMC.

- [Project Overview](#)
 - [Email Invitation language](#)
-

DRAFT Project Overview

The Activity Standards Design Collaborative is a virtual opportunity for AMC leaders, staff, and volunteers from across the organization to help shape the future of AMC activities level one and two.

Rather than focusing on a single event, the Collaborative creates multiple opportunities for volunteers to contribute ideas, test concepts, and help design a more consistent, scalable, and volunteer-friendly activity ecosystem. Through a series of virtual workshops, collaborative design sessions, and feedback opportunities, participants will work together to identify AMC activity level one and two parameters, safety policy, volunteer standards, tools, and training.

A primary focus of the project is developing clear Activity 1 and Activity 2 standards that establish organizational expectations for planning, leadership, participant experience, risk management, and operational support. The goal is to create a common foundation that enables volunteers to lead with confidence while preserving the unique character of AMC's many communities and programs.

Objectives

- Engage volunteers from across AMC in co-creating the future of Activity 1 and Activity 2 leadership and delivery.
- Develop shared Activity 1 and Activity 2 standards that improve consistency, quality, and participant experience.
- Identify opportunities to reduce administrative burden on volunteers (volunteers leading activities, activity approvers, and volunteer approvers).
- Surface innovative ideas and proven practices from across AMC's communities.
- Build greater alignment around what volunteers need to successfully create welcoming, safe, and mission-driven experiences.

Why This Matters

Activities are the primary way most people experience AMC. They are where members build relationships, develop skills, connect with the outdoors, and deepen their commitment to AMC's mission.

As AMC grows and evolves, creating a shared foundation for activities will help ensure that volunteers have the support they need to lead effectively, participants have consistently positive experiences, and communities across AMC can learn from one another while maintaining their local identity and traditions.

Expected Outcomes

- Draft Activity 1 Standards Framework
- Draft Activity 2 Standards Framework
- Recommendations for volunteer tools, resources, and support
- Opportunities to streamline processes and reduce leader burden
- Best practices and innovative ideas gathered from across AMC
- A roadmap for future implementation, testing, and refinement

Guiding Principle

Create together, build one foundation. This effort draws on the collective experience, creativity, and expertise of AMC volunteers and staff to create one shared foundation for Activity 1 and Activity 2 across AMC. That foundation will establish consistent expectations and support while leaving room for communities and programs to reflect their unique character and traditions.

Collaborative Design and Approval Process

1. **Frame the work.** OLDC, activity volunteers, staff, and key volunteer partners establish the design parameters, decision criteria, and non-negotiable safety and policy requirements.
2. **Gather experience and ideas.** Volunteers and staff from across AMC participate in virtual workshops and feedback opportunities to identify current practices, potential practices, essential leader capabilities, and the conditions that distinguish Activity 1 and Activity 2.
3. **Develop the shared foundation.** A staff team synthesizes the input into draft standards, tools, training expectations, and approval pathways designed for use across AMC. This will include wilderness first aid training requirements.
4. **Test and refine.** The drafts will be shared with the original collective group. The Collaborative will use a consent-based process rather than consensus. Participants will be asked whether a proposal is safe enough and sound enough not whether it is everyone's preferred solution. Concerns must identify a specific risk to the agreed objectives, safety requirements, organization, policy parameters, or practical implementation. Preferences and general disagreement will be documented and considered, but they will not block the work from moving forward.
5. **Review and approve.** The refined standards are presented to OLDC with a summary of the design input, testing results, unresolved questions, and implementation implications. OLDC

reviews the recommendations against the agreed criteria and formally approves the final AMC-wide foundation using a consent-based process rather than consensus.

6. **Implement and learn.** Following approval, AMC phases in the standards with clear guidance, tools, training, and support. OLDC staff monitors early implementation and uses evidence and volunteer feedback to guide future refinements.
-

Invitation

Subject: Activity Standards Design Lab: Levels 1 & 2

Help Us Build It! Activity Level 1 and 2 policy and volunteer Standards.

At the last OLDC/VCC/Leadership & Education meeting, we said we'd invite y'all to help build some alignment across AMC. The time is now!

Join volunteers and staff from across AMC for a hands-on virtual design experience. Together, we'll swap real stories, tackle sticky challenges, test fresh ideas, and help create one practical foundation for Activity Level 1 and 2 across AMC. You do not need to be a policy expert, just bring your experience, curiosity, and willingness to build something better.

Start with us on November 4, 4:30–5:45 p.m. ET, for an introductory virtual meeting. We'll introduce the challenge, explain how the Lab will work, and begin exploring what leaders and participants need for welcoming, safe, and mission-driven activities. Come ready to connect, contribute, and create!

-Colby & Mel

Need more info about the project now? Read the attached (attach above project description)

Need a refresher about what was discussed at our August meeting? Read on

- **Need for Leadership Alignment Across AMC:** Mel, Colby, and Aaron led a discussion on the longstanding need for clearer, more aligned leadership requirements and training pathways across AMC, highlighting the convergence of multiple streams of work and the challenges posed by inconsistent standards and technology tools.
 - **Historical Context and Challenges:** Mel explained that conversations about leadership alignment have been ongoing for years, with issues arising from inconsistent requirements between chapters and volunteer camps, and the increasing complexity of AMC as an organization. The lack of alignment has made it difficult to support current systems and technology.
 - **Leadership and Education Chair Insights:** Colby shared patterns from recent check-ins, noting that Outdoor Leader Fundamentals is now a common starting point, but local requirements still vary. Leaders want fewer barriers, and leading across AMC remains challenging due to differing requirements and training stops.
 - **Risk Management Perspective:** Aaron emphasized that similar leadership roles are governed by different requirements, creating barriers for qualified leaders moving between communities. The need for clear, organization-wide standards is critical for risk management, portability of qualifications, and reducing liability.

- **Future Ready Chapter Volunteer Strategy:** Mel described participant and volunteer expectations for consistent quality and leader training, easier onboarding, improved technology, and clearer pathways. The strategy aims to preserve local strengths while building systems for consistency and support.
 - **Technology Implications:** Mel noted that any changes to leadership requirements will impact technology systems.
- **Volunteer Roles and Participation in Alignment Efforts:** Mel invited participants to consider their desired level of involvement in the alignment project, discussing options for active design partnership, advisory review, or stepping back, and highlighting the importance of volunteer input and decision-making processes.
 - **Options for Volunteer Involvement:** Mel presented three options for volunteer participation: active design partner, advisory reviewer, or moving back with appreciation. Participants discussed their preferences, with some expressing interest in active involvement and others preferring advisory roles or minimal engagement.
 - **Consensus and Decision-Making Challenges:** Stephen and Rick highlighted past difficulties in reaching consensus, suggesting the need for clear guidelines and mechanisms to move forward when consensus cannot be achieved, such as staff intervention after volunteer input.
 - **Volunteer Feedback and Concerns:** Cindy and others emphasized the importance of maintaining local community and inclusivity, while also standardizing training where feasible. Bandwidth and time commitment concerns were raised, with suggestions for flexible participation and frequent updates.
 - **Defining the Project Scope:** Midori and Kate raised questions about the scope of alignment, including how much standardization is needed and how to balance risk mitigation with local differences. Mel acknowledged the need to clarify project goals and start with manageable steps.
- **Breakout Group Discussions and Report-Outs:** Participants, including Aaron, Justin, William, Cedar, Colby, and others, reported on breakout group discussions, sharing themes such as the importance of alignment, concerns about silos, bandwidth, communication, and the need to preserve local nuances while improving consistency.
 - **Alignment and Silos:** Aaron summarized that alignment is crucial, but the culture of silos persists, with compliance concerns and the need for interchapter activity committees to support alignment in specialized activities like paddling and climbing.
 - **Bandwidth and Communication:** Justin reported concerns about participants' bandwidth for ongoing meetings, suggesting alternative ways to contribute, such as email feedback. The need for clear communication about the project and its goals was emphasized.
 - **Nuance and Local Needs:** William noted the importance of understanding the different needs of activities and locations, balancing requirements as both barriers and positives, and considering cost and technology implications.
 - **Innovation and Burnout:** Colby highlighted innovation in younger groups and the challenge of burnout from constant change, raising questions about the scale of the problem and the number of leaders seeking portability across communities.
- **Next Steps and Project Definition:** Mel outlined next steps, including meeting with technology leadership, working with volunteers to define the project, and committing to follow up with participants by the end of August, while acknowledging the need for manageable progress and flexible engagement.
- **Clarification of Training Disparities:** Karen asked about the specific training disparities that prompted the alignment initiative, and Mel clarified that the issue is not a lack of training but inconsistent requirements and qualifications across chapters and activities, making it difficult to provide clear guidance to prospective leaders.
 - **Nature of Disparities:** Mel explained that the main challenge is the variety of requirements and criteria for leadership roles across AMC, rather than the absence

of training programs, resulting in confusion and difficulty for those seeking to become leaders.

- **Examples of Inconsistent Requirements:** Mel provided examples of differing requirements for paddling leaders in Boston versus Echo Lake Camp, illustrating the need to align criteria before addressing training content.

View recording here: [Outdoor Leadership Alignment-20260811 200107UTC-Meeting Recording.mp4](#)

Need a refresher about what was discussed at our August meeting? Read on

- **Need for Leadership Alignment Across AMC:** Mel, Colby, and Aaron led a discussion on the longstanding need for clearer, more aligned leadership requirements and training pathways across AMC, highlighting the convergence of multiple streams of work and the challenges posed by inconsistent standards and technology tools.
 - **Historical Context and Challenges:** Mel explained that conversations about leadership alignment have been ongoing for years, with issues arising from inconsistent requirements between chapters and volunteer camps, and the increasing complexity of AMC as an organization. The lack of alignment has made it difficult to support current systems and technology.
 - **Leadership and Education Chair Insights:** Colby shared patterns from recent check-ins, noting that Outdoor Leader Fundamentals is now a common starting point, but local requirements still vary. Leaders want fewer barriers, and leading across AMC remains challenging due to differing requirements and training stops.
 - **Risk Management Perspective:** Aaron emphasized that similar leadership roles are governed by different requirements, creating barriers for qualified leaders moving between communities. The need for clear, organization-wide standards is critical for risk management, portability of qualifications, and reducing liability.
 - **Future Ready Chapter Volunteer Strategy:** Mel described participant and volunteer expectations for consistent quality and leader training, easier onboarding, improved technology, and clearer pathways. The strategy aims to preserve local strengths while building systems for consistency and support.
 - **Technology Implications:** Mel noted that any changes to leadership requirements will impact technology systems.
- **Volunteer Roles and Participation in Alignment Efforts:** Mel invited participants to consider their desired level of involvement in the alignment project, discussing options for active design partnership, advisory review, or stepping back, and highlighting the importance of volunteer input and decision-making processes.
 - **Options for Volunteer Involvement:** Mel presented three options for volunteer participation: active design partner, advisory reviewer, or moving back with appreciation. Participants discussed their preferences, with some expressing interest in active involvement and others preferring advisory roles or minimal engagement.
 - **Consensus and Decision-Making Challenges:** Stephen and Rick highlighted past difficulties in reaching consensus, suggesting the need for clear guidelines and mechanisms to move forward when consensus cannot be achieved, such as staff intervention after volunteer input.
 - **Volunteer Feedback and Concerns:** Cindy and others emphasized the importance of maintaining local community and inclusivity, while also standardizing training where feasible. Bandwidth and time commitment concerns were raised, with suggestions for flexible participation and frequent updates.
 - **Defining the Project Scope:** Midori and Kate raised questions about the scope of alignment, including how much standardization is needed and how to balance risk mitigation with local differences. Mel acknowledged the need to clarify project goals and start with manageable steps.
- **Breakout Group Discussions and Report-Outs:** Participants, including Aaron, Justin, William, Cedar, Colby, and others, reported on breakout group discussions, sharing themes such as the importance of alignment, concerns about silos, bandwidth, communication, and the need to preserve local nuances while improving consistency.
 - **Alignment and Silos:** Aaron summarized that alignment is crucial, but the culture of silos persists, with compliance concerns and the need for interchapter activity committees to support alignment in specialized activities like paddling and climbing.

- **Bandwidth and Communication:** Justin reported concerns about participants' bandwidth for ongoing meetings, suggesting alternative ways to contribute, such as email feedback. The need for clear communication about the project and its goals was emphasized.
- **Nuance and Local Needs:** William noted the importance of understanding the different needs of activities and locations, balancing requirements as both barriers and positives, and considering cost and technology implications.
- **Innovation and Burnout:** Colby highlighted innovation in younger groups and the challenge of burnout from constant change, raising questions about the scale of the problem and the number of leaders seeking portability across communities.
- **Next Steps and Project Definition:** Mel outlined next steps, including meeting with technology leadership, working with volunteers to define the project, and committing to follow up with participants by the end of August, while acknowledging the need for manageable progress and flexible engagement.
- **Clarification of Training Disparities:** Karen asked about the specific training disparities that prompted the alignment initiative, and Mel clarified that the issue is not a lack of training but inconsistent requirements and qualifications across chapters and activities, making it difficult to provide clear guidance to prospective leaders.
 - **Nature of Disparities:** Mel explained that the main challenge is the variety of requirements and criteria for leadership roles across AMC, rather than the absence of training programs, resulting in confusion and difficulty for those seeking to become leaders.
 - **Examples of Inconsistent Requirements:** Mel provided examples of differing requirements for paddling leaders in Boston versus Echo Lake Camp, illustrating the need to align criteria before addressing training content.

View recording here: [Outdoor Leadership Alignment-20260811_200107UTC-Meeting_Recording.mp4](#)