



ACA National Council of Leaders

Wednesday, February 5, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., EST, Hilton Orlando, Orlando, Florida

Meeting Notes

Desired Meeting Outcomes

- NCOL members come together as a working body, representing their Local Councils and Boards and are prepared to engage with each other and National Board members
- Receive a reports and updates from the National President
- Receive updates from Affiliates
- Engage in discussions about timely issues including ACA's 20/20 Vision
- NCOL meeting participants contribute and receive information that will both inform the body and contribute to moving the growth strategies forward both locally and nationally

Welcome and Housekeeping: Kurt Podeszwa, National Board Members and NCOL Steering Committee Chair

Podeszwa welcomed all NCOL representatives, sharing his hopes for the in-person meeting time and encouraging the continuation of a high level of engagement among leadership. He acknowledged National Board members in attendance as well. He introduced Brian Crater, Southern California/Hawaii as the newest member of the NCOL Steering Committee.

Report and Updates from the ACA National President: Tish Bolger

Bolger provided a synopsis of the National Board meeting which had taken place on the previous day. Highlights from the half-day meeting included a description of the process the board is using to gain greater understanding of the financial impact of ACA services, programs and product lines. The board will evaluate these using the filter of the association's Ends. During its April meeting, the board will take the process a key step further, providing direction relative to association-wide resource allocations. Bolger reminded the NCOL about the key role they play as the communications link between the National Board and local leadership.

Updates from Affiliates

New England, Nat Saltonstal

Saltonstal provided personnel updates including their long-time executive, Bette Bussel has served the New England office for more than 20 years. There are currently six FTE and although there has been some attrition, they are now fully staffed in an office based in Lexington, MA. They will experience a board leadership transition in March as Steve Sudduth becomes president, presiding over a board of 20. Major accomplishments include a highly successful fundraising event known as Camp Champions grossed more than 130k and helped send 100 kids to camp. The event generated a great deal of very positive PR. In addition, New England completed the year with a modest financial surplus. Additional camp director workshops have been offered. A Summer Fund contract will benefit 25,000 children, and will engage 75 camps. Challenges include keeping up with the demands placed on visitors. Goals include a successful implementation of the Summer Fund projects, continued collaborations with state associations, engaging is a strategic business planning process and refining the funds development strategy as it relates to CCC and ACA, Inc.

Illinois, Sylvia Dresser

Dresser reminded the group about the business model in the ACA, Illinois corporation that makes it unique among the affiliates. The Illinois affiliate office serves as a program office for the Title XX program. Maintaining a separate tax status in the state of Illinois is a requirement to continue serving in this capacity. The funds from Title XX cover the majority of the Executive's salary as well as other staff in the office, and a percentage of the overhead. The program provides funds and placement for children as well as adults in summer programs including both accredited and non-accredited camps. The revenue and program activity of the Illinois Affiliate outside the Title XX program is much smaller in scale than our other two affiliates. Challenges include shoring up the Standards leadership as there was a sudden and tragic death of their chair.

New York and New Jersey, Andy Pritikin

Pritikin shared several accomplishments including the creation of new marketing materials to send to prospective camps, to get them to consider joining ACA. An excellent year-round staff manual was developed. Regarding personnel, some recent changes were made involving the standards and membership position. A new professional development assistant is in place. The office location will likely change as it is becoming too small. A non-dues revenue committee has been created to explore options, including sponsorship on multiple levels and fundraising. The Fall conferences went great. A LEAD Teen conference in the Spring will be held as well as Tri State.

ACA's 20/20 Vision: Checking-in and Looking Forward: Peg Smith, ACA CEO

Smith shared several key demographic points including the make up of our current camps vs. the US population, demographics of directors and staff, etc. Income levels of camper families were shared and contrasted to those of the general population. Smith shared that the world continues to outpace our efforts. At the current pace of demographic change in ACA's camp community, it will take us until 2046 to reach 2030 projections. The 20/20 Vision is as much about social justice as it is an economic necessity. You are encouraged to take a look at the PPT loaded on the NCOL homepage to see specific details that were shared with the NCOL.

ACA National Awards – Road to Relevancy: Dayna Hardin, National Board Member

Hardin described the efforts of the National Awards Committee to review the types of awards, recognition and criteria of our current system, in order to ensure the process and outcomes are relevant in a contemporary association. Many of the awards we still present today were created decades ago. Although great strides have been made to simplify the process for nominators, streamline the operational aspects, and make the experience very meaningful for awardees, the limited nominations received overall speaks to the need to push for greater change. At the request of the National Board, the NCOL was then asked to spend some time in smaller breakout groups discussing three, key questions and providing feedback and recommendations. A handout outline work-to-date was provided. The information that follows are the comments taken from each group's set of flip chart sheets. Verbal report-outs were offered.

How do we engage the next generation of camp professionals in the process?

- Need to know more about what is being given as awards across the country that could lead up to a national award.
- Now based on long term – not the way areas are now – gear to young, mid level people.
- Different types of service as well as long term. How to reach other people than director/owners.
- LOCAL proactive in looking for people and programs rather than waiting for nominations.
- Roll in has had an effect on nominations.
- How does word get out? Made sure people know anyone can nominate.
- Visitors can observe and note

- Online form makes it easy.
- Need title rather than person's name.

What is missing?

- Current awards overlap.
- Survey of members/
- Corporate sponsorship of awards including scholarships and grants.
- Incentives and expectations.
- Local/regional/national levels of awards...moving up in competition.
- Innovation awards?
 - Environmental
 - Program
 - Business
 - Facilities
 - Collaboration
- Mentorship
- Early career
- Section/field office
- Expand awards to be 2 annually for each/individually/group.
- How about awards related to strategic direction?
- 20/20 Outreach awards?
- Organizations that win awards give presentation at? Local conf? National Conf?
- Are awards still relevant?

How can the Process of Recognition be approached differently?

- Call for Nominations
- Program Awards – Survey Monkey for Visitors
- Examples for criteria, "...do we have people who..."

Accreditation and our Shared Future: Key Conversations regarding Field Feedback: Jude Bevan, NSC Chair and NCOL Steering Committee Member

Bevan reiterated key steps in the process of evaluating the accreditation model, including some history of the short-term task force focused on standards volunteers and models to increase camp diversity, chaired by Dave Silverstein. At this point, the NSC is gathering feedback from the proposed recommendation (which was accepted conceptually by the NSC) which involves a five-year visitation cycle. As part of the process, the NSC recognizes the valuable and timely opportunity to engage in critical discussions and gain feedback from the leadership of ACA across the country. Bevan asked the NCOL to participate in facilitated discussions. The topics follow as well as key comments shared during the reporting process.

Topic One: Increasing number and diversity of camps accredited

Background statement: Part of the original charge to the Visitor System Task Force was to "generate ideas for developing accreditation models that expand the camps and/or programs involved in ACA's standard's program".

What does a future accreditation model look like or need to consider to be inviting to “non-traditional” camps and still serve and be relevant to our current accredited camps and programs? Discuss and share aspects of the standards and the process of becoming accredited that either invites or discourages diversity.

- Need to mesh our programs with those of various states licensing (like NJ). Align with regulatory bodies
- One week – medical concerns, not interested “in the book” ; maybe free or nominal fee
- Barrier of entry is the overwhelmingness of the standards
- Need a ‘standards light’ – would include basics of what need to do and only applies to them
- A provisional gateway in – a step in. Consider an apprenticeship year or apprenticeship level
- Gold, Platinum, five star camp.
- Can’t be all or nothing approach
- Online certification Quiz
- We need to ask those not involved what they think of a five year cycle
- Offer affordable online trainings – not just for professional development but also for best practices
- Have a “how to go through accreditation for dummies
- Cost factor or perceived cost factor; cost/benefit analysis – Education! Best Practices!
- Can somebody at National or Regional have the ability to adjust the cookie cutter rigidity of regular accreditation?
- Provide mentors from accredited camps
- Do aware with the terms accreditation and standards; perception is not good and perception is reality
- Hold trainings at accredited camps with ACA info. available. May/may not be a real standards training yet would address topics relevant to the standards
- Educate the consumer, the public

Topic Two: Compliance during non-visit years

Background statement: Many of the comments received to date indicated that the credibility and integrity of our accreditation program cycle depended on a system for rigorous compliance between visits.

Please brainstorm some methods by which you feel ACA should hold a camp accountable in non-visit years?

- Camps should be required to have at least one person from a camp to serve as a visitor
- The focus needs to be on providing a visitor and explaining the value of visiting camps
- If more people volunteer to be visitors, does this mean fewer volunteers for others tasks?
- Could training and leadership other volunteer role (LCOL) – do these roles help with integrity (I’m not sure what was being meant by this comment – rlm)
- Self-integrity is worth more
- Having a survey/questionnaire might hold you accountable between those non-visit years – question was asked “Will it really do anything?”
- Who reviews the questionnaire yearly? LCOL? National? Visitors?
- What if visitors were assigned to a camp for five years and they are the ones to review? Downside would be the visitor wouldn’t “see” other camps.
- Use instructors as mentors
- Would the questionnaire have to be done annually?
- Questions could be based on most missed standards
- Questions change each year
- Accreditation score could determine if a camp could be on a five year cycle
- Idea of what to be completed in various years:
 - Visit
 - SOC

- Survey
- SOC
- Visit
- Are we making this more complicated?

What do you feel the tolerance of accreditation camps will be for such requirements?

- It depends on the camp
- New camps coming in won't know the difference
- Long term accredited camps might struggle w/ new system w/ transition years
- Technique/method to be used to complete the SOC and survey is important: Easy and accessible
- Goes back to the value of being a visitor – recruit more visitors: how do we convey the importance/value to camps to have visitors on staff
- Need to solve visitor crisis: recruit more visitors

Topic Three: Building our pool of accreditation volunteers

Background statement: Camps providing a visitor is one potential approach that has been suggested to address the much larger issue about how we sustain our current pool of visitors and how to continually grow that visitor-base. This will occur through a variety of strategies, which may include accredited camps providing a visitor. The following was discussed:

- *Strategies that ACA could use to market/recruit potential volunteers to increase the number of visitors. Who should the marketing strategies be directed to?*
- *What pools of potential volunteers are being missed? Are there specific strategies to use here to market and recruit from these groups?*
- *What are realistic and meaningful incentives for members to become an accreditation volunteer?*

Requiring a Visitor

- Possibly becomes a deterrent to accreditation
- Puts small camps in a tough position; possibly scaled based on camp size; possibly an exemption
- Maybe offer other ways that camp could support ACA
- Not all camps may be able to provide a quality visitor

Incentives

- Professional development benefits
- Win an award – recognition
- Chance to win a conference attendance
- Membership fee benefit – reduced or comped
- Compensation for high volume of visits

Strategies

- Shift visit to shoulder seasons
- Connect the new membership category to this
- Recognition based on # of visits – both individual and camps
- Survey visitors
- Offer visitor training at different times of years
- Create an internship category
- Rebuild training process

Potential pools being missed

- Kindred folks one step outside of camping

- Long time camp parents
- Counselors
- Staff who may have left camp
- Vendors

Deterrents

- Time
- Expertise
- Cost

Topic Four: The Value of a Visitor:

Background statement: In general many of the comments received reflected on the value for the camp with having a member of the staff serve as an accreditation visitor, as well as the value to the individual. *What value do you see to having an accreditation visitor on a camp's staff? What are the impacts of a camp providing a visitor (good or bad)? What would prevent a camp from encouraging one of their staff to become a visitor?*

VALUES

- Staff who are visitors have a broader understanding of what it means to have high standards and how to manage associated risks with running and operating a camp
- Education is happening internally
- Continued education
- Staff have total “buy-in” and that helps the camp
- Helps the camp do a better job with their own accreditation
- Staff bring back “great ideas” to their own camp
- Networking – helps to know others that you can call – cooperativeness
- Mentoring and networking – even with competitors
- Cooperative not competitive
- Exchange of best practices
- If camps have a support staff serve as visitor (such as maintenance person) then that person learns more about the total camp operation.

NEGATIVES

- Time needed/devoted to being a visitor
- Occasionally a visitor may be lured away by a camp they visit
- Being asked to do 2-3 visits/season
- Some camps send a staff to visitor training yet the camp does not allow them to actually become a visitor
- Need to be chosen carefully- some visitors can become too rigid or too comfortable.
- Some visitors could be assigned to visit a competitor's camp.
- Best to not allow individuals from agencies to visit camp from their agency (or same type: Y to Y).
- Visitors need to LIKE to visit
- We do not have a good system to ID visitors who move from one area to another - especially as they change roles
- If we go with a five year cycle, will visitors conduct enough visits to stay current and sharp?
- Visitors need “stages” to develop their skills (communication, judgment, being an ACA ambassador, learning to say no)
- Need system for 2nd visitor to evaluate the lead visitor
- Camp leadership may be gone when person is visiting
- Inconsistency of visitors – level of integrity
- Potential or real conflict of interest
- Great variation of how field offices administer/manage visitor requirements

- Lack of training (or demonstrated need for training) of how to deal with difficult situations/tough questions
- Maintaining the current system is dumb – needs to be a better method than checking boxes
- Visitor development is lacking

GENERAL

- General consensus is that 5 year-cycle will be good and hopefully foster more accountability
- Being a visitor is professional development
- Gateway to better volunteers
- Is there logic in having some visitors go to the same camp to foster “mentoring”?
- Small field offices can mentor/coach problematic visitors – which may take time
- Visiting process is great – Professional development opportunity, especially for young professionals
- Gate way for more volunteers yet not taken full advantage of

Proposed Standards Revisions Relative to Mass Violence: Jude Bevan, NSC Chair

Based on the discussions held at the National Council of Leaders meeting held in Dallas, February 2013, the ACA National Board (BOD) requested the National Standards Commission (NSC) to review standards related to camper safety. In addition, the BOD had previously requested the NSC to review standards related to criminal background checks. In response to these requests, and being responsive to the emerging environment, the NSC recommends the following revisions and one addition to the ACA accreditation standards. ACA legal counsel has approved the revisions, which were subsequently shared with the ACA National Board during their January 2014 meeting via conference call. Revisions would become effective for the 2015 cycle. As part of the NSC’s process of public review, additional input is sought from key audiences, internal and external. Working from the same breakout groups as the earlier discussion, NCOL leaders were asked to react to and provide input around the proposed changes. As the text is lengthy, a separate document has been loaded on the NCOL homepage, with a full outline of the standards in review, and the reactions shared during the meeting.

Overall Wrap-up: Kurt Podeszwa, NCOL Steering Committee Chair

Podeszwa thanked NCOL representatives for their contributions including input in the areas of awards and the larger topic of volunteer recognition, the future accreditation model and standards revisions related to mass violence. He encouraged the audience to participate fully in the National Conference and reminded all about the new conference app. A show of hands revealed all but a handful of NCOL representatives had downloaded the new app.

The **mission** of the American Camp Association is enriching the lives of children, youth and adults through the camp experience

ACA End Statements

1. There will be greater public understanding of and support for the value of the camp experience.
2. An increasing number of children, youth, and adults of all social, cultural, and economic groups, will have a camp experience.
3. The camp experience will be of high quality.