



American Camp Association

National Council of Leaders Meeting, February 3, 2015

In-conjunction with the ACA National Conference at the New Orleans, Hilton Riverside

Meeting Notes [Draft](#)

Welcome – Kurt Podeszwa, Chair of the NCOL Steering Committee, greeted and welcomed all representatives, asked for any changes or adjustments to the agenda, and shared some housekeeping items for the half-day meeting. Kurt thanked the group for forwarding a number of content-based topics, which will be shared with the Professional Development Team as well as volunteer Professional Development Chairs. There were some excellent content needs identified by representatives.

State of ACA – Tish Bolger, ACA National President

Tish recognized recently retired CEO Peg Smith's many contributions and characterized her as a change agent and visionary who had made exceptional contributions during her 16 year tenure in the chief staff role. Tish mentioned briefly that the Volunteer Project that had been put on hold last Autumn would resume soon. An update on the CEO search process was offered with key benchmarks including points about a search firm being selected, recruitment commencing following a contract being finalized with the selected firm, and a final candidate, ideally identified, for the late Spring meeting of the Board of Directors. She reminded the NCOL audience that the hiring of a CEO is a critical function of the BOD. Steve Ingram was introduced. Steve is serving as ACA's Interim CEO for the next several months, working primarily to support the BOD in its work, and to connect the BOD with association's staff.

Bolger shared that although ACA has experienced a number of changes in the last six months, including rolling out the staff operational transformation, our financial position was not jeopardized. Our cash position remains strong, and we are on target to meet and in some cases, exceed performance goals.

Staff teams in the East, Middle and Western areas of the country were introduced, by name and function. To see more ([link](#)). While for some, just coming into information regarding these changes, the moves may seem abrupt, but in reality, the groundwork has taken years.

Outreach –Diversity—David Berkey, member, ACA Board of Directors

Berkey shared the focus of the BOD Task Force on Diversity and described the pilot event planned for the 3rd in New Orleans. The Outreach Summit was designed to forge relationships in the host city for the National Conference. Community leaders were identified, contacted, and encouraged to join a conversation focused on youth development, held in conjunction with the National Conference. Participants are invited to the half-day Summit and encouraged to join us for the opening keynote

lecture, breakouts and evening events. The response has been positive. The Task Force plans to evaluate the event and consider additional opportunities to host Summits in conjunction with other ACA events as well as future National Conferences.

Updates from Affiliates

ACA New England – Steve Sudduth

Sudduth shared recent success with the Camp Champions event that provides children with opportunities to have camp experiences, as well as the plans to continue participation in a research effort relative to urban camps. The latter provides non-dues revenue to the Affiliate. New England will be hosting a live, first-time, online camp fair. Work relative to minimum wage issues is underway with the Mass Camp Association with coordination from the New York & New Jersey Affiliate. Additionally, New England is closely monitoring elevated interest from the Federal Motor Carrier Division relative to vehicles transporting camp participants in Maine.

ACA, Illinois – Samantha Thompson

“Sam” Thompson provided a report including a Title XX update. More than 4620 youth were served through the program in 2014. Staff changes include the addition of Colette Marquardt as Director of Operations. Colette has served as an active volunteer and leader, including most recently as Chair of the MidStates Camping Conference. Plans for MidStates are well underway. Last year the event featured a one-day Day Camp Conference drawing 127 participants, while the full MidStates event drew more than 900. Cooperative CEU/CEC arrangements have been made with IPRA. Dale Adkins and Isaace Brubaker are the new Standards co-chairs.

ACA, New York & New Jersey – Scott Lantzman

Scott shared several updates including some staff changes. Progress is being made on the new website and job search tools. Camp extensions for visits were offered with 10% (this is the max acceptable number) deferring visits for one year. The Affiliate considers this a pilot opportunity for a five year visit cycle, recommended by the Visitor Task Force. Tri-State has moved to a Tuesday-Thursday schedule and has added 10% more sessions to address seating shortages at previous events. This year’s conference features a closing with Hilary Clinton. Special opportunities to reserve priority seating for \$750 are available as well as \$1500 photo opportunities.

How We Arrived Here; Where We Are; and Where We are Headed

Ann Sheets, Past President and Chair of the 20/20 Task Force (sunsetted in 2011) provided an overview, including a PowerPoint with planning milestones, to remind us of the steps in our planning that helped get us from where we were, to where we are today. While for some, today’s staff design and local delivery system seems like a sudden and abrupt change to our way of providing service, Ann provided historical context. You are encouraged to view the PPT available here ([link to NCOL home page](#)) and share with LCOL and Affiliate Board members.

Group Work, Brian Crater, NCOL Steering Committee Member

Process: NCOL representatives and Board of Directors were divided into three groups and asked to discuss a series of probing questions with a facilitator and scribe. Crater provided an overview, and prior to each activity, described what would take place next. After discussing the first question, the groups moved, but left their notes on the flip chart sheet for the next group. The process repeated after the second question with a move to a new set of notes. For round three, the groups looked at the aggregate notes from the previous two groups, discussed the last question and developed the points for report outs. *Please note: these points recorded below are verbatim from flip chart sheets, however; one group turned their notes in via Word.*

Discussion point one: Questions and Concerns

Group A

- Size of Local Councils
- Long term plan? How will or should the service areas change through growth?
- Lost “local face” of ACA
- Understanding how to access services. Who does what? Are the new staff’s roles aligned with what we think is important?
- How do we foster more young, professional involvement
- Losing personal touch with changes and staff not necessarily located in the same region – how will they understand challenges and issues of the local area?

Group B

- More people available to support member camps with the recent staffing changes – moving from a very part-time person to having 5 full-time staff who can support – excited about the opportunities, expectation of it being wonderful
- Affiliates are unsure of how the roll-up will affect them
- Is the process being rushed for hiring new exec?
- ACA can educate stakeholders by showing the history of the transitions to see that it isn’t “all of a sudden,” but rather has been a very strategically planned transition that has happened over many years
- What are the resources for members to know who to call after the transition
- General public still doesn’t know enough about who ACA is; ACA NY/NJ has an opportunity with Hillary Clinton speaking to bring some national/international attention to camping – as an affiliate how does that translate into an opportunity for ACA, Inc., for the field in general, etc.
- The Field Section Executives have been the constant in the transitions a few years ago – it is hard to know right now who will be the constant as member camps try to navigate the sea changes
- What roles that staff have filled will now be expected to be taken up by volunteers (e.g., LCOLs) and how much will be taken up by the new staff members? What will fall through the cracks?
- How long will we be in this “awkward transition?”
- Communication is important – although it may not be an “all of a sudden transition” it comes across in that way to many because they announcement of it was sudden without a lot of the history behind it (going back to the need for communicating the history – and vision – of the transition)

- Mentorship as a focus for membership development needs more emphasis – transitions and succession planning needs some work

Group C

- Unclear focus
- Who do we want to be?
- Lesson the LCOL management load
- How do we make camp affordable to reach the masses
- How can we make a bigger difference?
- Are we having the right conversations with the right people?

Discussion point two, Communications: What is our role as NCOL representatives and local leaders helping people “get it?” What does the support look like to help us succeed in communicating? What should be coming from us considering the communication we as the NCOL serve?

Group A

- Ensure that we transmit the knowledge and support to folks on the ground
- Have conference calls that clarify roles and responsibilities
- Be proactive with confidence in our leadership
- Having time to build relationships
- It’s great to have support, but you have to know how to manage it. What staff can support you in which initiative?

Group B

- Top 5 Questions List... Top 5 things you want to talk about; Top 5 services you want to see
- NCOL/LCOL needs to hold ACA, Inc.’s feet to the fire in terms of their hiring of a CEO – hiring search firms to fill such positions can be challenging for non-profits because search firms are often more familiar with the for-profit world and don’t understand non-profits as well, and sometimes camps at all; We need to be paying attention from a grassroots level and giving feedback
- Communication gap sometimes is mediated by the fact that ACA is “different” for different people in terms of what they are expecting or needing from ACA, so their perspective is different. Is the “business” of ACA important to most members, or are they looking more for education/professional development; are we going to change our communication style going forward to try to achieve different results?
- Sometimes being part of NCOL just feels like we’re being humored – we’re not really a part of anything... the conversations seem to recycle – what is our role, what are we doing, why do we exist? Leaves us feeling jaded about our role and the importance of it. It seems we’ve moved further and further away from making any real contributions.
- Are we just a reporting body – tasked with disseminating information and decisions made by Board and Staff? Can we be an influencing body? Are we an “advisory board?” Can we set our own agenda or influence the Board’s agenda, or are we just handed topics to discuss among ourselves?
- If NCOL is going to advise the Board, should NCOL meet first and then report to the Board rather than the other way?
- Should NCOL discussions be broken up by West/Central/East regions?

- Webinars are hard; face-to-face is better, but may not be feasible

Group C

- We have a personal responsibility to be engaged
- We need to use time more efficiently
- We would like to be a think tank
- Webinars are not places to give opinions. They are best used to share information
- The Diversity Task Force would benefit from some LCOL member participating
- Having specific, numeric objectives
- Continue conversations like public violence
- Develop action steps to support who we want to become

Discussion point three, Moving Forward: how can we collectively make an impact?

Group A

- More communication regionally, but in general, communication is key
- Create Affinity Groups
- Celebrate and share ideas
- What are the strengths in regions?
- Understand “support” vs. over direction or control issues
- Will we still be able to do what we believe is important to us?
- Local leadership needs to invite new staff into our world
- It’s critical that we keep people engaged at the local level

Group B

- We need more targeted, specific goals for these meetings and for the group
- What is/who is on the NCOL Steering Committee? What are they steering and where are they steering us?
- Should we break ourselves down into smaller groups in order to better tackle topics and goals?
- Are we an operational group that should advise staff, or are we a governance advisory “think tank” that should advise Board? Operational vs. strategic?
- Can mid-year regional meetings happen along with conferences that are happening in the various regions? Would it be more practical to hold those at the end of those conferences – as a post-conference meeting/workshop – so that those involved in putting on the conference can feel freer to participate?
- Great ideas always bubble up from the bottom
- How can we improve/run more productive conference calls/webinars? (No real solutions determined, other than possibly breaking them down into smaller discussions.)
- What are our best practices, where can we set/raise the bar, and how does that get delivered uniformly?
- How can we leverage Internet (and other) resources to make sure people know about the good that is being done out there in the world of camping?
- Not necessarily related to the NCOL, but this year would have been an important opportunity for regions to meet together and to meet their staff, not just have section meetings. Going

forward having a regional meeting that could be brief and then break into section meetings could be beneficial

Group C

- Stay in the big picture
- Be sure we don't get stuck in operations
- We should drive our own agenda
- We know we are not maximizing right now
- We have more questions than answers
- We need to keep moving forward: membership; standards; 20/20
- Engage in higher level organizational thinking.

Report Out to Full Group

Burning question(s) arising in group

Group A

- What is the local council's participation in giving feedback of staff support? What are the roles and responsibilities of new staff and LCOL's working together?
- Are we staff or volunteer driven? Are we going to engage volunteers in a meaningful capacity.

Group B

- What are our Top 5 Priorities and what are Board/Staff's Top 5 Priorities?

Group C

- Are we having the right conversations with the right people? Do we all need to be here?

What is our "Aha"

Group A

- It is time to move into the issues that impact the membership

Group B

- Take control/ownership of steering committee – we need some form of governance within the NCOL – we would like to have a lateral connection to BoD rather than a vertical one – having one person from West, Central, East, an Affiliate, and an at-large member who serves as chair to serve as this group

Group C

- Stay focused on the big picture, recognizing we have the talent. We just have to figure out how best to maximize it.

What is the one action we would like to see taken?

Group A

- Can the regions meet?

Group B

- Regional meetings

Group C

- Develop the action steps to get us where we need to be. Disseminate topics for feedback to LCOLs in timeframes where they can be involved in the process. Help craft policy based on local feedback.

Wrap Up

Podeszwa thanked representatives for being present in their work groups and making meaningful contributions. He noted the maturation of the NCOL as a working body and the need to consider what is next, to ensure we are doing our part to move the mission of ACA forward as a collective.

DRAFT