

American Mountain Guides Association and American Alpine Institute



Organizational Decision Making:
A Look into how the American Mountain Guides Association
and the American Alpine Institute
Sets, Evaluates, and Changes Standards and Practices

American Mountain Guides Association

- Organization that oversees mountain professionals in the United States.
- Provides certification courses and exams for Instructors and Guides.
- Provides land management advocacy for Instructors and Guides.
- Provides Accreditation for Guide Services.
- Represents the United States with the International Federation of Mountain Guides Association (IFMGA)

American Alpine Institute

- Climbing School and Guide Service that operates in six states and in sixteen countries.
- Started in 1975 by Dunham Gooding
- Developed alongside the AMGA.
- AAI's guide training program became the template for the AMGA Alpine Guides Program.

Organizational Decision Making

What is organizational decision making?



Organizational Decision Making

The thought process of selecting a logical choice from all of the available options.



Organizational Decision Making

Outside Impression of Organizational Decision Making

- Coherent and Rational Process
- All perspectives are considered in an orderly manner.
- All voices have the best interest of the organization in mind.



Organizational Decision Making

Reality of Organizational Decision Making

- Often Chaotic – Especially when there is not a clearly defined decision making leader.
- Some perspectives are given more weight than others.



AMGA Decision Making

AMGA Hierarchy:

- Board of Directors
- Executive Director
- Technical Director
(Technical Committee)
- Instructor Team and Office Staff



AMGA Decision Making

How does the AMGA update/change curriculum or develop new programs?



AMGA Decision Making

Before a new course is created or a piece of an existing course can be changed, a problem has to be identified. These problems tend to be brought to the AMGA's attention from two sources:

- IFMGA
- Industry Needs Assessments

AMGA Decision Making

There are two elements that lead to change in the AMGA:

1. External Factors
2. Combination of External and Internal Factors

AMGA Decision Making

External Factors – There's really only one external factor that will lead to new curricula or a new course without a vetting process.



AMGA Decision Making

Combination of External and Internal Factors—

- Conversations with American Guides to assess their needs.
- Conversations with Instructor Team
- Conversations with Accredited Businesses
- Conversations with Industry Partners

AMGA Decision Making

Once it's determined that there should be change:

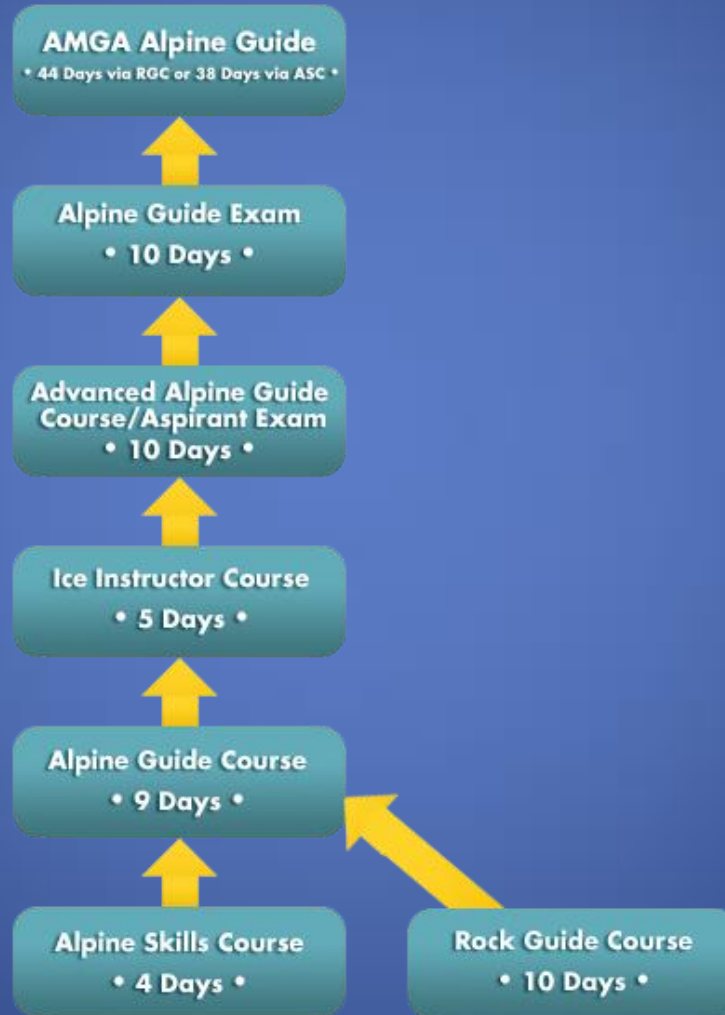
- The Technical Director and the Executive Director work together to develop a new program.
- The curriculum is then presented to select members of the Technical Committee.
- The curriculum may also be presented to select AMGA members.

AMGA Decision Making

Following this process, a pilot program is run by key members of the instructor team.



AMGA Decision Making



AMGA Decision Making

Changes to Curriculum or Standards:

- Instructor Team and Membership have close ties to equipment manufacturers.
- Email debates take place with the instructor team.
- Technical Committee and Technical Director have the final say.

AMGA Decision Making

Main Takeaway:
Third Party Review

- Constantly vetted by the IFMGA
- Constantly vetted by members of Instructor Team
- Constantly vetted by membership
- Constantly vetted by industry partners
- Constantly vetted by accredited guide services

American Alpine Institute

Decision Making

The goals of a climbing school and/or a guide service are different than the goals of the AMGA.

- The AMGA is in the business of training guides, whereas a guide service is in the business of training climbers and bringing people to places where they don't feel comfortable going on their own.

American Alpine Institute

Decision Making

- The AMGA assumes that people come to them with a high level of proficiency in the mountains and will not work with those who don't have such proficiency.
- AAI was designed to meet the needs of all levels of potential participants.

American Alpine Institute

Decision Making

The American Alpine Institute has two distinct goals with its participants:

1. Train people of all levels to become solid independent climbers.
2. Provide programming in the world's great ranges.

American Alpine Institute

Decision Making

How is a new program designed by AAI?

- Market Assessment
- Curriculum Development
- Marketing Campaign
- Pilot Program
- Participant and Guide Feedback
- Program becomes available

American Alpine Institute

Decision Making

Main Takeaway:

Third Party Review

- Constantly vetted by the AMGA
- Constantly vetted by employees
- Constantly vetted by industry partners
- Constantly vetted by clientele

Changing and Updating Standards

Best way to do this:

- Technical Committee
- Industry Partners
- Third Party Review

Changing and Updating Standards

