



AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION

ACCREDITATION MANUAL Version 1.0 2014



AMGA ACCREDITATION MANUAL

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Acknowledgments

The AMGA accreditation program evolved from a safety review system used by Outward Bound since 1972. This manual was initially written in 1988 by Ian Wade, former safety officer for Outward Bound USA and past president of the AMGA. It was revised in 1992 by Steven Young, AMGA Executive Secretary, in 1995 by K.C. Baum, AMGA Accreditation Review Director, in 2002 by Jon Tierney with assistance from K.C. Baum, Marc Chauvin, Alain Comeau, Mark Houston, Arthur Haines, Joe Lentini, Charlie Townsend, Todd Vogel, and in 2012 by Ed Crothers, AMGA Accreditation Director. The present version builds upon their work.

I. AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION ACCREDITATION OVERVIEW

American Mountain Guides Association Accreditation has been developed for any program offering climbing instruction, guided climbing or skiing services. First established in 1986, the evolution of the accreditation program has been guided by professional guides and climbing instructors who are leaders in the outdoor industry. The Accreditation Director, who works in conjunction with the Accreditation Committee, oversees the program. The Accreditation Committee is made up of AMGA certified guides and climbing instructors.

The purpose of AMGA Accreditation is to increase the professionalism of mountain guiding and climbing instruction in the United States by functioning as a tool for institutional self-evaluation and development. It is a voluntary means of quality assurance and external review that examines such things as business practices, compliance with state, federal and local regulations, staff training and professional development, resource stewardship, and adherence to current industry standards. This credential represents a commitment to excellence through exemplary operating standards and an adherence to the highest ethical standards of this profession. AMGA Accredited Programs represent many of the nations most recognized and respected guide services, climbing schools, and educational institutions

AMGA Accreditation and Certification

“Forward-thinking individuals are participating in AMGA courses and exams. Forward-thinking business owners are pursuing AMGA accreditation and increasing the number of AMGA trained and certified guides and instructors on staff.”

AMGA Certification is a credential issued to individuals. It represents the international standard for guides and climbing instructors in specific types of terrain. The AMGA is only organization in the United States to offer a comprehensive training and certification programs for *mountain guides* that is recognized by the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA). Additionally, it is the only organization in the U.S. that offers training and certification for *climbing instructors* that has been endorsed by the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA.)

AMGA Accreditation is a credential granted to programs that have successfully gone through the AMGA accreditation review process. Accredited Programs must demonstrate a commitment to high technical standards, strong programs, and a quality staff of engaged and engaging climbing instructors and guides. This is accomplished by requiring accredited programs to have AMGA certified guides and climbing instructors on staff. While it is not required that all of an accredited programs' guides or climbing instructors on staff are AMGA certified, it is an expectation that the program will encourage staff members to pursue AMGA certification, provide mentoring, and support staff through the AMGA training and certification process. Furthermore, it is required that programs conduct annual terrain specific trainings utilizing AMGA certified staff members.

Benefit to the Public

Accreditation provides a consistent and meaningful standard by which to judge the reliability and professionalism of a guide service or climbing program. AMGA Accredited Programs inspires an exceptional client experience by:

- Creating and maintaining consistent industry standards
- Ensuring rigorous and uniform guide training
- Maintaining compliance with state and federal law
- Promoting ethical business practices

Benefit to Land Managers

AMGA Accredited Programs work proactively with their staff, clients, public and private land managers, and the general public to actively engage in the protection of all mountain environments for the good of all people and for future generations.

Benefits to Accredited Programs

- Improves your program through a thorough review of your business practices and infrastructure that focuses on encouraging and assisting programs in efforts to improve program quality.
- Provides opportunities for continuing staff education and professional development by giving your full-time guides a 10% discount on AMGA Mountain Guide Program courses and exams.
- Includes access to AMGA growing brand recognition through the use of the AMGA Accreditation Logo in marketing and promotional materials.
- Gives greater exposure for your organization by being listed on the AMGA website, which includes a link to your website, company logo, and contact information. Note: the AMGA website averages 1000 hits a day.
- Ability to post jobs at no charge on AMGA's website, in the monthly E-newsletter, and in the AMGA Blog and Facebook sites.
- Offers access to public lands where AMGA Accreditation or Certification is required to obtain a commercial use permit.
- Includes an invitation to all employees, non-AMGA and AMGA members, to attend the AMGA Annual Conference and participate in free professional development clinics
- Promotes greater brand recognition through AMGA ads run in Rock and Ice, and Climbing magazines.
- Demonstrates to clients, potential clients, land management agencies, and competitors that your program is in compliance with nationally and internationally recognized performance standards.
- Adds credibility to the development of guiding and climbing instruction as a profession and improves public perception of the performance of the profession as a whole.
- Offers protection against unwanted regulation or court rulings by demonstrating to federal, state, and local regulators a commitment to the "public good" through a voluntary review process and commitment to high industry standards.
- Provides support, advocacy, and lobbying on access and regulatory issues.

II. BECOMING ACCREDITED—THE PROCESS

Steps to Accreditation:

1. Application and Initiation

Program contacts AMGA Accreditation Director to discuss eligibility of said program for AMGA Accreditation. If eligible, the operator is directed to the Accreditation Manual and Self Assessment Questionnaire on the AMGA web site.

2. Accreditation Manual and Self Assessment Questionnaire

This manual can be accessed on the AMGA website as a PDF or can be emailed from the AMGA office as a Word document. It includes a description of the AMGA Accreditation Program and guidelines to help the operator complete the process. The following forms are included within the questionnaire:

- a. Accreditation Program Overview
- b. Staff Roster Spreadsheets (fill out 1 per applicable program category)
- c. Program Questionnaire
- d. Supporting Document Checklist

3. Accreditation Application Fee

Fees are based on the number of full-time seasonal employees. Payment must accompany application materials.

Number of employees	Annual Membership Dues	Accreditation Review Fee	Dues + Review (every 4 th year)
Non-Profits	\$250	\$750	\$1000
1-6	\$250	\$1000	\$1250
7-12	\$250	\$1250	\$1500
13+	\$250	\$1500	\$1750

4. Review and Initial Report

The next step is for the program to complete self-assessment questionnaire and submit it to the AMGA Accreditation Director along with the requested supporting documents, and applicable accreditation fee. This fee covers accreditation review expenses. Note: It is strongly recommended that this information be sent electronically as a DVD, CD or attachments to an email. Doing so expedites the review process

The Accreditation Director carefully reviews the self-assessment questionnaire and supporting documents. While this is taking place, the Accreditation Director will be contacting employees of the program and land manager for areas where the program operates soliciting their input regarding the program's performance.

Once this has been completed the Accreditation Director will send the applicant an initial report, providing feedback where applicable. It will also include a list of changes that are deemed necessary to meet the AMGA accreditation standards, a request for additional documents if necessary, and a brief summary of the Accreditation Director's observations. The program has 30 days to respond to the recommendations being made in the initial report.

5. Accreditation Report/ Program Responses*

The Accreditation Director will review the response to the initial report and prepare a final report with recommendations to be submitted to the Accreditation Committee. In the Accreditation Report the Accreditation Director will recommend to the committee one of the following options:

A. Grant accreditation.

B. Defer accreditation contingent on additional information or specified corrective actions. If accreditation is deferred based on additional corrective measures being needed, the program will have 60 days to respond with a plan of action. The Accreditation Director and Accreditation Committee will not make a formal decision to grant accreditation status until the program has responded in writing and all required changes have been met. Evidence that a program has met required changes might be based on one or more of the following:

- i. A written report indicating requested improvements have been made.
- ii. A meeting of representatives of the program with the accreditation committee.

C. Deny accreditation. A program whose weaknesses are too numerous, too significant, or that has issues that cannot be eliminated within a prescribed period of time may be denied accreditation status at this time.

The Accreditation Committee will respond to the Accreditation Director's recommendation within 10 working days. Failure to respond within 10 working days will be interpreted as a committee member's support of the Accreditation Director's recommendation. Once a consensus has been reached by the Committee regarding the Accreditation Director's recommendations, the program will be contacted and informed of the final decision.

*Note that until the Accreditation Director notifies a program, only the Accreditation Director may disseminate information about a decision. Following notification, decisions on applications shall be public information unless an appeal is in progress. The AMGA may release information to other agencies, media, and its membership about the accreditation status of programs.

6. Appeals

The final decision of the Accreditation Director may be appealed in writing within thirty days by the program to the Accreditation Director. The Accreditation Director will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and forward it to the Accreditation Committee for timely resolution through communication with the program.

If agreement cannot be reached, then the issue will be forwarded to the AMGA Board for action at the next scheduled board meeting. The Board may appoint an independent committee to consider the appeal or the Board may hear the appeal itself. If a committee is appointed, they will make a recommendation to the Board at the next scheduled meeting. The decision of the Board at this meeting will be final and must be by a majority vote.

Any additional expenses incurred by the Accreditation Director as a result of a protracted review or appeal will be born by the program.

7. Accreditation Contract

If the AMGA grants accreditation, both the program and the AMGA will then sign an accreditation contract. Sample contract below:

AMGA ACCREDITATION CONTRACT

This Accreditation Contract (the “Contract”), made as of the ____ day of _____, 20__, by and between the American Mountain Guides Association (the “AMGA”) and _____ (the “[**Insert Short Name of Organization**]”), an AMGA Accredited Business, sets forth certain terms and conditions of membership in the AMGA Accreditation Program.

1. Term and Termination.

- a. The effect of this Contract shall commence on the final approval date set forth by the AMGA Accreditation Director in a confirmation letter and terminating on December 31 of the following fourth calendar year, subject to the Conditions of Accreditation set forth in Article 2. For example, the term of a business accredited in April 2008 expires December 31, 2012. The Parties shall have the option to extend the term of this Contract for an additional four (4) year period from the expiration date of this Contract.

The current four (4) year accreditation expiration date of this Contract is: -
_____.

- b. An expiration notice will be sent out by the AMGA office twelve (12) months prior to the Contract expiration date, and it is the responsibility of [**Organization**] to apply for and complete a re-review before the term expires (unless special arrangements have been made with the AMGA Accreditation Director or if the AMGA cannot accommodate). If the [**Organization**] has not renewed its Contract or responded to the AMGA office by the Contract expiration date, this Contract is terminated. A termination letter shall be sent to the [**Organization**] within one (1) month after the date of expiration of this Contract.
- c. Upon termination of this Contract and receipt of a termination letter, [**Organization**] is expressly prohibited from any further use of the AMGA logo and associated AMGA Accreditation Program advertising in any and all public literature. The [**Organization**] will be removed from the list of AMGA Accredited Businesses and must reapply through the AMGA office if future accreditation is desired.

2. Conditions of Accreditation.

- a. On January 1, 2017, the AMGA will implement revised Accreditation Terrain and Education Standards (as more fully described in the AMGA Accreditation Manual in Attachment A to this Contract) (hereafter referred to as the “Revised Standards”). In order to retain AMGA accreditation, on January 1, 2017, **[Organization]** must be in compliance with the Revised Standards, regardless of the expiration date of this Contract. The AMGA reserves the right to terminate this Contract, if the **[Organization]** fails to comply with the Revised Standards on or before January 1, 2017.
- b. **[Organization]** shall conduct its business in accordance with the requirements of the AMGA, which are revised from time to time and documented in the AMGA Accreditation Manual, AMGA Accreditation Terrain and Education Standards, and the AMGA Code of Ethics. If **[Organization]** fails to adhere to AMGA accreditation requirements, the **[Organization]** will be subject to remedial action by the AMGA, which could result in suspension or revocation of the **[Organization’s]** accredited status. An appeal committee will be appointed by the AMGA Board of Directors to review any complaints received about **[Organization]**, to conduct a review if necessary, and to decide on a remedial action. If **[Organization’s]** accredited status is revoked, **[Organization]** must apply for a re-review before it can be regain its accredited status.
- c. **[Organization]** must join the AMGA at the Accreditation Program Member level and pay the associated annual membership dues. A program’s accredited status will be suspended by the AMGA Accreditation Director if the membership dues are over three (3) months delinquent.

The current contribution expiration date is

[ORGANIZATION]:

Signed By: Date:

AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION

Signed By: Date:
AMGA Accreditation Director

III. MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

Duration Of Accreditation

Accreditation remains valid as long as accreditation standards are maintained. A full Accreditation Self-Assessment Questionnaire must be submitted every four years along with the designated accreditation review fee.

Changes That Could Affect Accreditation

- New ownership.
- Guides not meeting terrain requirements.
- High incidence of fatalities or serious injuries within the program.
- Loss of insurance.
- Violation of AMGA code of ethics, such as illegal guiding or false marketing.

The self-assessment process relies on honest reporting. If a program no longer meets accreditation requirements, it must report this to the AMGA Accreditation Director who will work with the program if it desires to maintain accreditation.

Spot Reviews

Spot field or administrative reviews may be done at any point during the accreditation period to ensure compliance with accreditation guidelines. A field review can also be requested by a program, essentially for consulting purposes. The fee for this is determined by the size of the program and complexity of the review. The minimum fee begins at \$1000 plus expenses.

Issues Arising During Accreditation Period

If evidence is found that an accredited organization program has fallen below accepted practices or has breached the accreditation contract then one of the following actions will be taken by the Accreditation Director and/or Accreditation Committee based upon the “size” of the issue:

- Send letter of concern
- Send letter of warning
- Accreditation is immediately suspended pending further investigation
- Revocation

Accreditation Marketing Guidelines

The primary purpose of accreditation is to provide education and feedback to a program and a general assurance to the public that the organization has demonstrated ability to meet industry standards. Once achieved, programs may freely market their accredited status within AMGA Brand Policy guidelines.

Programs may not utilize any statements, logos, or graphics that suggest that they are accredited, or likely to be accredited, until they have received notification from the Accreditation Director that they are accredited.

Owners of programs who advertise falsely are subject to revocation of AMGA membership, of AMGA accreditation, and possibly legal action.

If "Accredited Status" is granted to a college, school, summer camp, or other program within which climbing instruction and guiding is one of several sports or activities being

conducted, that program's publication of its "AMGA Accredited Status" must include wording, indicating the specific aspects of the program that have been accredited—rock climbing, alpine, ski mountaineering.

IV. EDUCATIONAL AND TERRAIN STANDARDS

An accredited program employs individuals who have received specialized guide and/or climbing instructor education or who can document significant experience appropriate to the terrain they guide. Accredited programs utilize AMGA certified individuals to conduct trainings and help mentor individual employees through the AMGA certification process. Before looking at accreditation requirements by terrain category, it may help to better define some of these terms. Additional information concerning both supervision and mentoring is available from the AMGA office.

Guide Levels

- **Lead Guides:** AMGA certified guides or climbing instructors in one or more disciplines appropriate to the terrain they work in. It is required that accredited programs employ at least one AMGA certified guide for each of the disciplines they either guide or offer instruction on. These individuals can work as supervisors and mentors. The exception to this requirement applies to Ski Guide and Ski Mountaineering Guide terrain. In these two disciplines a Lead Guide can either be AMGA certified, have received specialized guide education or who can document significant experience appropriate to the terrain they guide.
- **Guides:** Guides who have received specialized guide education or who can document significant experience appropriate to the terrain they guide. In some situations these guides can work as supervisors, mentors or may require general supervision.
- **Assistant Guides:** Guides who do not meet the requirements for Lead Guides or Guides who require direct supervision. Also included in this category are interns, guest professional climbers, etc.

Supervision Guidelines

Supervision of guides is a serious commitment and expected of accredited programs. In such relationships, a measure of the responsibility for a guide's actions and the results of those actions, whether they are good or bad, lie with the supervising guide and the employer.

- **General Supervision:** Supervisors are expected to meet regularly with guides and to provide periodic briefings and debriefings about route selection, strategy and client care along with regular progress and performance reviews. It is the supervising guide's responsibility to ensure that assigned tasks are appropriate to a guide's training and ability.
- **Direct Supervision** is required in some instances. Direct supervision implies daily briefings and debriefings about route selection, strategy, client care for the day and side by side guiding such as two rope teams traveling together on a glacier or on nearby multi-pitch routes.

Accredited Programs And Mentoring

From the perspective of the AMGA, one of the more important roles played by accredited programs is mentoring individual guides through the AMGA certification process. The AMGA certification process requires guides to work professionally, documenting a required number of guiding days between entry level and advanced courses and between courses and exams. While the mentoring process is well developed in other IFMGA countries, it is still evolving in the U.S., and accredited programs approach mentoring in several different ways. AMGA accredited programs enable individual guides to get the professional experience they need to pursue certification. Some organizations provide direct financial

support for guides taking AMGA courses and exams. Some provide in-house guide trainings specifically designed to help guides prepare for AMGA exams.

In-House Training

AMGA accredited programs should provide training to their staffs in the disciplines in which they guide. For an organization operating in all 7-program categories, this would involve 6 training days a year, 2 each for guides working in rock, alpine, and ski mountaineering. In any year, an AMGA course can replace a guides' training requirement in the appropriate category. **Note:** The AMGA does not require in-house training for staff who are AMGA certified for the terrain they work on

Who Is Considered A Guide Or Instructor?

Any employee directly responsible for client care in terrain as described under the terrain guidelines. Interns, guest professional climbers, etc. may work alongside a qualified guide or instructor.

AMGA Accreditation Program Terrain Categories:

1. Single Pitch Instructor Terrain
2. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Instructor Terrain
3. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Guide Terrain
4. Alpine Guide Terrain
5. Advanced Alpine Guide Terrain
6. Ski Guide Terrain
7. Ski Mountaineering Guide Terrain

Accreditation Standards By Terrain Category

1. Single Pitch, or Ice Climbing Instruction

This category includes programs teaching climbing in a top rope or single pitch setting with straightforward approaches and descents that do not involve short rope techniques.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual terrain-appropriate training in top rope/single pitch (or higher level) instruction. An AMGA Certified Single Pitch Instructor, Rock Instructor, or Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Emergency Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced medical care. Basic First Aid/CPR is the minimum required of instructors working closer to advanced medical care.
- C. **Staff Requirements:**
 - Option 1:** provide at least one AMGA Certified Single Pitch Instructor per site—a site is defined as an area where all ropes are within easy and unaided visual and verbal communication.
 - Option 2:** An individual who is not an AMGA Certified Single Pitch Instructor but who has taken and passed a higher level AMGA rock course, aspirant exam or exam also qualifies.

2. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Instructor Terrain

This category includes rock climbing ascents (to Grade III) on routes with reasonably straightforward approaches and descents that do not involve significant use of short rope techniques.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in rock climbing instruction. An AMGA Certified Rock Instructor or Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Emergency Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced medical care. Basic First Aid/CPR is the minimum required of instructors working closer to advanced medical care.
- C. **Staff Requirements:**
 - Lead Guide:** Lead guides are AMGA Certified Rock Instructors or Rock Guides.
 - Guide:** Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:
 1. A resume of **guide trainings**; including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 2. A **guide resume** documenting 100 days of professional rock guiding of multi-pitch routes in the last five years;
 3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 50 multi-pitch traditional climbs. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.

Assistant Staff: Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

3. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Guide Terrain

This includes full day ascents (Grade IV and above) and/or routes with complicated approaches and descents that often involve a wide variety of rope techniques and transitions.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in rock climbing instruction. A certified Rock Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Emergency Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced medical care.
- C. **Staff Requirements**
 - Lead Guide:** Lead guides are AMGA Certified Rock Guides.
 - Guide:**
 - Option 1:** Guides have taken the AMGA Rock Instructor Course and will be expected to take the AMGA Rock Guides course once they meet the professional experience requirements for the course.
 - Option 2:** Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:
 1. A resume of **guide trainings**; including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 2. A **guide resume** documenting 200 days of professional rock guiding of multi-pitch routes in the last five years;

3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 50 multi-pitch traditional climbs. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.

Assistant Staff: Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

4. Alpine Guide Terrain

This includes non-glaciated technical terrain typical of the Sierra or Rockies where a variety of rock and snow climbing skills and rope techniques will need to be employed.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in alpine guiding. An AMGA Certified Alpine Guide or AMGA Certified Rock Guide who is a graduate of the AMGA Alpine Guides course must teach this training.
- B. **Emergency Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced medical care.
- C. **Staff Requirements**

Lead Guide: Lead guides are AMGA Certified Alpine Guides.

Guide: **Option 1:** Guides have taken the AMGA Alpine course.

Option 2: Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:

1. A resume of **guide trainings**; including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
2. A **guide resume** documenting 100 days of professional alpine guiding in the last five years;
3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 30 alpine climbs representative of the terrain in which they guide. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.

Assistant Staff: Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

5. Advanced Alpine Guide Terrain

This typically involves glaciated terrain such as that found in the Cascades and Alaska where a variety of travel and guiding techniques will need to be employed.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in alpine guiding. An AMGA Certified Alpine Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Emergency Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced medical care.
- C. **Avalanche Training:** Lead guides require Level II avalanche training if operating in forecasted areas and AMGA approved Level III avalanche training if operating in non-forecasted areas.

- D. **Staff Requirements**

Lead Guide: Lead guides are Certified AMGA Alpine Guides.

Guide: **Option 1:** Guides have taken the AMGA Alpine Guides Course. In these cases, these guides will be expected to take the AMGA Advanced Alpine Guides course once they meet the professional experience requirements for the course.

Option 2: Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:

1. A resume of **guide trainings**; including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
2. A **guide resume** documenting 100 days of professional alpine guiding representative of the terrain in which they guide
3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 30 alpine climbs representative of the terrain in which they guide. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.

Assistant Staff: Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

6. Ski Guide Terrain

This involves predominantly ski tours in the mountains including ascents and descents on non-glaciated terrain.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual terrain-appropriate training in ski guiding. An AMGA Certified Ski or Ski Mountaineering Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Emergency Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced medical care.
- C. **Avalanche Training:** Lead guides require Level II avalanche training if operating in forecasted areas and AMGA approved Level III avalanche training if operating in non-forecasted areas.
- D. **Staff Requirements**

Lead Guide: **Option 1:** Lead guides have taken the AMGA Ski Guides or higher course.

Option 2: Lead Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation committee upon request:

1. A resume of **guide trainings**; including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
2. A **guide resume** documenting 30 days ski guiding in backcountry terrain.
3. A **personal resume** spanning at least 3 years documenting at least 50 days skiing in terrain similar to that which they guide. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.

Assistant Staff Requirements: Assistants not meeting Lead Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide.

7. Ski Mountaineering Guide Terrain

This involves predominantly ski tours in the mountains including ascents and descents on glaciated terrain.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in ski guiding. An AMGA Certified Ski Mountaineering Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Emergency Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced medical care.
- C. **Avalanche Training:** All guides require Level II avalanche training if operating in forecasted areas and AMGA approved Level III avalanche training if operating in non-forecasted areas.
- D. **Staff Requirements**

Lead Guide: Option 1: Lead guides have taken the AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guides Course. Lead guides may be hired who have taken only the Ski Guides Course. In these cases, these guides will be expected to take the AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guides course once they meet the professional experience requirements for the course.

Option 2: Lead guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation committee upon request:

1. A resume of **guide trainings** including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
2. A guide resume documenting 30 days ski guiding in glaciated terrain.
3. A personal resume spanning at least 5 years documenting at least 100 days skiing in terrain similar to that which they guide.

Assistant Staff: Assistants not meeting Lead Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide.

V. AMGA ACCREDITATION SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

Please answer the following questions concisely, but describe the full scope of your operations.

If the answer to a question can be found in the supporting documents accompanying the questionnaire, there is no need for a narrative. Simply indicate specifically where the information can be found within those documents. Where necessary, checkmarks can be inserted as an X or by using the option key+v on your keyboard.

Confidentiality

The AMGA recognizes that programs applying for accreditation or re-accreditation are required to submit information that is crucial to the operation of said programs. All information exchanged during an accreditation review, whether it is written, electronic, oral, or observed, is held in the strictest confidence. Neither the AMGA Accreditation Committee, the AMGA Board of Directors, or the membership at large have access to any of the information submitted to the Accreditation Director prior to, during, or after an accreditation review. Information the Accreditation Director has received will be disclosed to other parties only when it is legally required, and then on a strict need-to-know basis.

V.1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program: Name, Address, Phone, Website, Email

Owners: Name, Address, Phone, Email

Primary Program Contact During Review Process: Name, Address, Phone, Email

How many years has program been in operation?

Years of operation under present ownership/management?

Staff Profile:

- Number of full time guides / climbing instructors _____
- Number of full time, seasonal guides / climbing instructors _____
- Number of part time, seasonal guides / climbing instructors _____

If this is a reaccreditation review:

- Number of guides or climbing instructors that have taken AMGA courses or exams since last review _____
- Number of new AMGA certified guides or climbing instructors since last review _____

Terrain Category*:

Annual client program days **

___ Single Pitch Instructor Terrain	___
___ Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Instructor Terrain	___
___ Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Guide Terrain	___
___ Alpine Terrain (non-glaciated)	___
___ Alpine Terrain (glaciated)	___
___ Ski Guiding Terrain	___
___ Ski Mountaineering Terrain	___
Total	___

**Check all terrain categories that apply. Note that the categories may not describe all of your programs' operations. Instead, they describe the areas where the AMGA has training programs and standards in place.*

*** Accreditation focuses on an organization's primary program categories. You need not submit guide rosters in Program Categories that comprise less than 3% of total client program days.*

Approximate percentage of client days spent in each season:

Winter	_____
Spring	_____
Summer	_____
Fall	_____

V.2. GUIDE ROSTER SPREADSHEETS**Directions:**

Please attach one per terrain category. These need not be redundant. For example, a rock climbing guide service with 10 guides. Three are qualified as "Lead Guides" for Rock Guide Terrain (which automatically means they are an AMGA Certified Rock Guides; three more are "Lead Guide" qualified only for Rock Instructor Terrain; the remaining 4 are only qualified for Single Pitch Instructor Terrain. The Single Pitch Instructor Roster Spreadsheet would list the 4 Single Pitch Instructor only guides. The Rock Instructor Guide spreadsheet would list only the 3 Rock Instructors; the Rock Guide spreadsheet would list only the 3 Rock Guides. It would be assumed that Rock Guides would sometimes work in SPI and Rock Instructor Terrain and that Rock Instructors would also do SPI days.

V.2.a. Single Pitch Instructor Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for single pitch rock or ice climbing instruction in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified SPI (Y/N)	Higher Level AMGA Rock or Alpine Course (Specify)	Meets Rock or Alpine Guide Requirements (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor				

Lead Guides				
Guides				
Assistant Guides				

V.2.b. Multi Pitch Climbing, Rock Instructor Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for multi-pitch climbing, rock instructor terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Rock Instructor (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Meets Guide Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor				
Lead Guides				
Guides				
Assistant Guides				

V.2.c. Multi-pitch climbing, Rock Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for multi-pitch climbing, rock guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Rock Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Meets Guide Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor				
Lead Guides				
Guides				
Assistant Guides				

V.2.d. Alpine Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for alpine guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Alpine Guide (Y/N)	Certified Rock Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Meets Guide Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.2.e. Advanced Alpine Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for advanced alpine guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Alpine Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Avalanche Training (List)	Meets Guide Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.2.f. Ski Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for ski guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Ski Guide or Ski Mountaineering Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Avalanche Training (List)	Meets Lead Guide Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.2.g. Ski Mountaineering Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for ski mountaineering guide in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Ski Mountaineering Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Avalanche Training (List)	Meets Lead Guide Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.3. PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Mission

1. Provide mission statement or describe your program's mission.

Permit/Licenses and Land Management Relationships

2. List the following:
 - Areas of operation (name and location)
 - Permit requirements for each area (Are permits required or not required? What type of permit has been issued?)
 - Contact information for each permit manager or landowner (name, title, and email)
 - Insurance requirements
 - What programs operate in each area
3. Describe how **employees** are made aware of applicable rules and regulations for areas of operation.
4. Describe how **clients** are made aware of applicable rules and regulations at all areas of operation.

Insurance

5. Provide proof of general liability insurance coverage. Documents provided should clearly indicate that the policy is:
 - Current;
 - Covers all program activities;
 - Indicates amounts of per occurrence/aggregate coverage.
6. Provide proof of current Workman's Compensation insurance. If Workman's Compensation insurance is not provided, describe how an individual guide is insured in the event of an at-work injury.
7. List any additional insurance policies or endorsements pertaining to the operation of the program (ex. non-owned automobile coverage, program's vehicle insurance, professional liability insurance, etc.)

Marketing

8. Indicate marketing tools utilized (check all that apply; Option Key+V):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ads in magazine/periodicals (provide name of publications)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Website (provide web address)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Catalogs/brochures/takeaways (provide copies)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Media: Facebook
<input type="checkbox"/>	Twitter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blog
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other?

9. If multiple marketing tools are employed, how does the program ensure that marketing materials are consistent?
10. How does the program ensure that marketing materials clearly and honestly describe **products and services** offered by the program?
11. How does the program ensure that marketing materials clearly and honestly describe the **risk** associated with the company's activities?

Client Screening and Registration

12. Who does the screening? When? How?
13. Is an application form used? If yes, provide a copy or provide a link to the form.
14. Is a medical screening form used? If yes, provide a copy or provide a link to the form.
15. What type of legal instrument is used to protect the company from claims of negligence: Acknowledge of Risk, Waiver/Release of Liability, or combination of both? Please provide a copy.
16. What forms are available for download on the program's website (check all that apply; Option Key+v)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Application
<input type="checkbox"/>	Health and medical history
<input type="checkbox"/>	Release of liability/acknowledge of risk
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rental equipment

17. Are there prerequisites for courses and/or guided activities? If yes, indicate specifically where that information can be found.
18. What steps are taken to ensure that prospective clients are appropriate for a given activity?
19. Describe how confidential information provided by clients on application and/or medical screening forms is managed. How long are documents kept on file; where are they stored; who has access to them?

20. Are individuals under the age of 18 allowed to participate on programs? If yes, provide any procedures or guidelines in place pertaining to minors on programs.

Client Care

21. How does the program ensure that staff is aware of specific medical needs of clients?
22. Prior to the start of activities, how does the program clearly inform and verify that participants are adequately aware of potential risk? If a scripted safety briefing or outline is used, indicate specifically where that information can be found.
23. Prior to the start of activities, describe how the program ensures that the clients are adequately equipped.
24. For all that apply, list guide/instructor to client ratio for each terrain type:

SPI	
Rock Instructor	
Rock Guide	
Alpine Guide (non-glaciated)	
Alpine Guide (glaciated)	
Ski Mountaineering Guide	

25. If overnight trips are offered, are clear expectations set for where guide and client responsibilities start and stop? For example, does your operation handle food preparation or is the client responsible for his or her own food? If guide and client camp together, does the workday end with the climbing, or is the guide responsible for the client while camping?

Personnel Management / Training

26. Are guides hired as employees or independent contractors?
- If independent contractors, are they covered under the company's general liability insurance policy?
 - If yes, please provide a copy of the page in the policy that indicates independent contractors are covered or a statement from the program's insurance broker indicating that independent contractors are covered under the terms of the policy.
 - If no, are independent contractors required to provide proof of general liability coverage?
27. How is each employee provided with an accurate and current description of his or her role and responsibilities?
28. Briefly outline how the program's instructors / guides are mentored through the AMGA training and certification process.

29. How does management ensure that staff is currently certified in emergency medical care for the areas they operate on?

30. Indicate documents maintained in staff files for each employee (check all that apply; Option Key+v):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee's job application
<input type="checkbox"/>	IRS Form W-9
<input type="checkbox"/>	IRS Form W-4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employment contract
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employment history
<input type="checkbox"/>	Climbing resume
<input type="checkbox"/>	Skiing resume
<input type="checkbox"/>	Guiding resume
<input type="checkbox"/>	Training resume
<input type="checkbox"/>	Guide certification certificates
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avalanche education certificates
<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance reviews and feedback
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency medical and CPR certifications
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consent for medical treatment (in the event of a work related injury)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff next of kin emergency contact information form
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copy of current driver's license
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copy of passport
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copy of automobile insurance certificate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Criminal background report

31. Under what circumstances are instructors or guides allowed to work outside of the terrain designations established by the AMGA accreditation standards?

32. Describe how employees participate in a minimum of two days of related training / continuing education in each discipline per year, either internal or external to the organization?

33. Describe how regular communication, cooperation, and respect among managers and guides are maintained?

34. How does the program evaluate instructors and guides after each season and/or course, and advise on professional development needs?

35. Describe the screening process for assessing levels of technical skill, experience, and judgment of potential guides.
36. Describe how direct and indirect supervision of “assistant guides” occurs (staff meetings, debriefings after trips, debriefings with course participants, course evaluation forms).
37. What internal staff trainings have been run in the last year? List per terrain category (rock, alpine, ski), give dates, type of training, and name of trainers.

Operations Manual

38. Indicate documents used by program and provide copies of each (Option Key+v):

	Guides' Manual
	Operations Manual
	International Operations Manual
	Administration Manual
	Risk Management Plan
	Incident Management Plan

39. How often are those documents reviewed and revised? Provide the date of the last major revision.
40. How does the program ensure that employees are adequately acquainted with the manual?

Equipment

41. List equipment that is provided by:
 - The program
 - The guides / instructors
 - The participants
42. List equipment issued to individual guides and instructors by the program (ropes, first aid kits, technical equipment, radios, sat phones, etc.).
43. How does the program ensure that equipment being provided by **guides / instructors** meets the manufacturers recommendations for use and retirement?
44. How does the program ensure that equipment being provided by **clients** meets manufacturers recommendations for use and retirement?
45. Describe the program's maintenance, documentation, and retirement policies for equipment.
46. Does the program rent technical climbing or skiing equipment to individuals other than clients or course participants? If yes, provide copy of rental form(s).

Program Activities and Risk Management

47. Describe the management review process to authorize new program activities or areas of operation?

48. When guide / instructor assignments are made, how does the organization ensure that guides / instructors' skill is sufficiently above the participant skill and knowledge level to respond effectively in an emergency?
49. Provide location of **helmet use policy** in Guide/Operation Manual for:
Clients- Page:
Guides- Page:
50. Provide location of **drug and alcohol policy** in Guide/Operation Manual for:
Clients- Page:
Guides- Page:

Risk Management

51. Does the organization have a written risk management plan with procedures and guidelines for each terrain classification and for overall operations? If yes, provide a copy or indicate where that information can be found. If no, briefly outline the emergency plans in place for all areas of operation and how guides / instructors are made aware of that information.
52. How has the organization evaluated the availability of medical and rescue assistance in each of its areas of operation? Briefly describe the emergency communication plan established to facilitate rescue and medical service for all areas of operation or indicate where that information can be found.
53. How do managers of the program keep informed about what is actually taking place in the field?
54. Is there a clear incident/accident/near miss reporting procedure? Please describe or indicate where that information can be found.
55. Is there a clear serious injury and death response procedure written? If yes, indicate where that information can be found.
56. Has the program had any accidents or near misses under the current ownership or management? If so, explain.
57. Please provide list of contents in guides / instructors' first aid kits or indicate where that information can be found.
58. Are first aid supplies carried on multi-pitch routes? If no, explain why.

Environmental

59. How does the organization ensure LNT principles and practices are being followed in all program areas?
60. List LNT trainings offered in the last past 12 months.
61. List LNT Master Educators on staff.

62. Describe how the organization works proactively to assist land managers on environmental issues.
63. How does the organization ensure that employees have a general understanding of the natural and human history of the program area(s)?

Transportation / Vehicles

64. Indicate modes of transportation used by program. Check all that apply (Option Key+v):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clients are responsible for ground transportation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally, staff transport clients in <i>personal</i> vehicles
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff transport clients in <i>personal</i> vehicles
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff transport clients in <i>program</i> vehicles
<input type="checkbox"/>	Independent contractor provide ground transport of clients
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sno-Cat (owned by program or provided by independent contractor?)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Helicopter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed wing aircraft
<input type="checkbox"/>	Watercraft (owned by program or provided by independent contractor?)

65. Provide program transportation procedures and guidelines.
66. If the program owns vehicles, describe how they are regularly serviced and records are kept accurate.
67. What first aid and rescue equipment is available in program vehicles in case of accidents?
68. Outline driver screening and training procedure?

Conclusion

69. What are the reasons for pursuing AMGA Accreditation?
70. Please list any concerns, ideas, and specific recommendations for changes to the Accreditation Program or the review process?

VI. SUPPORTING DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

Please include all applicable documents with the Accreditation Self Assessment Questionnaire.

	Accreditation Review Fee (see...for appropriate amount)
	Completed Accreditation Self Assessment Questionnaire
	Operations/Guide/Administrative Manuals
	Copies of Commercial Use Permits
	Copy of General Liability Insurance
	Copy of Motor Vehicle Insurance Policy (if applicable)
	Proof of Workers' Compensation Insurance
	Copy of current business license
	Names, title, and email address for applicable land management agencies
	Names and email address for guides/instructors/employees
	Copy of printed marketing materials
	Copy of Release of Liability/Acknowledge of Risk form
	Copy of Equipment Rental form (if applicable)
	Copy of Medical Screening form
	Sample personnel file (sensitive personal information should be blacked out)
	Risk/Incident Management Plan
	Copy of client feedback form
	Client equipment lists
	Copy of SOAP note