



American Mountain Guides Association
Executive Director
Position Profile
www.amga.com

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Mission: To inspire and support a culture of American mountain craft.

Vision: To provide renowned, world-class training and certifications to AMGA guides and aspiring guides. To safeguard access to climbing and skiing areas utilized by the guided public. To offer cutting edge resources and services that support and enhance the livelihoods of guides. To be the community hub for all American mountain guides, climbing instructors, and their clients. To be at the forefront of growing and advancing the guiding profession

Values: Integrity:

The AMGA believes in strict adherence to the highest ethical standards of the profession. Mountain guiding, ski guiding, and climbing instruction are professions of honesty, etiquette, and composure. Guides are responsible for all their actions and personal conduct when representing the AMGA and their profession.

Stewardship:

AMGA members are committed to actively engaging in the protection of all mountain environments for the good of all people and for future generations.

Community:

Commitment to trust, respect, civility, teamwork, and general welfare of the entire AMGA community and the professional guiding and climbing instructor community as a whole.

Excellence:

Commitment to a diverse and dynamic community, high technical and academic standards, strong programs, and a quality staff of engaged and engaging instructors and examiners.

Balance:

The AMGA strives to balance the interests of its membership and to act for the collective interests of the guiding community.

OVERVIEW

The American Mountain Guide Association's founders were hardcore climbers and skiers who understood the outdoor culture thoroughly. They realized the soul of these sports didn't have to be compromised by organization. Organization could instead serve to bring the community together in a revolutionary way. It could provide mountain guides with resources, services, and credentials to boost their careers, but also with connections to each other and to the larger community of guides and clients across the country and around the globe.

Climbers and guides can be an irreverent bunch. Organizing them is about as easy as picking up scattered marbles with chopsticks. Extraordinarily, the AMGA has successfully implemented its vision of standardizing the guiding profession across America's vast and wild climbing and ski mountaineering community. Today, The American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) is a 501(c)(3) educational non-profit fully dedicated to supporting the American mountain guiding and climbing instructor community. As the leading organization of America's most vibrant, inspiring community of climbers and skiers, the AMGA offers cutting edge knowledge and hundreds of years of collective experience that surpasses that of any other climbing organization in the United States. AMGA guides and staff are the experts in the business of being a guide. They have spent over 30 years setting standards for American guiding instruction, protecting the guiding environment, and organizing a powerful, unified community of guides and clients.

THE HISTORY OF THE AMGA

The story of American guides goes back many years and can almost be traced to the year its international partner, the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (UIAGM/IFMGA) was founded, 1965. It was in this same year that American John Harlin founded the International School of Mountaineering in Leysin, Switzerland. Soon other guides joined the ISM, familiar names such as Royal Robins, Gary Hemming, Layton Kor, and Brits Dougal Haston and Don Whillans. Even though the ISM did not officially require instructors to be UIAGM certified guides until about 1980, certainly both organizations had long been keenly aware of each others' developments. But, it wouldn't be until 1997 that the two organizations would be officially tied together.

Since the 1970s, several American groups tried their hand at guide certification, including the American Alpine Club. But it wasn't until 1979 that the first real steps were made. In Jackson, Wyoming, a group of guides decided to formalize an organization representing the greater guide community—the American Professional Mountain Guides Association. Twelve guides—among them Jim Donini, Yvon Chouinard, and Peter Lev—penned the “Moose Bar Charter” on napkins in the Moose Bar.

However, the APMGA didn't get very far either in uniting American guides, nor in getting UIAGM approval. As those climbers discovered (and embodied), the wildness and freedom of the mountain guide community would not easily be contained. Spread across the country, guides operated regionally, with little communication between each other. The international community was equally dismissive of America's efforts. One request, long ago, for information from the UIAGM by Doug Robinson was met gruffly with a letter commenting on “monkeys without ropes”.

Thus, climbing standards were all but impossible to implement. But then the insurance crisis hit. From the mid-80s until 1990, insurance premiums rose and coverage became unavailable for many guides. Many faced the loss of their guide services or careers. Subsequently, this spurred John Fischer, owner of the Palisades School of Mountaineering, and Allan Pietrasanta, a guide, to try again to mobilize America's guides. “It was hard to get everybody together; this was before the age of cell phones and Internet,” he explained. But they persevered. And finally a lot of people saw the light. Said Pietrasanta, “The seminal event in my mind for the AMGA, and the reason it exists today, was that meeting we finally had in '86 at the Tetons Climbers' Ranch.” The well-attended meeting had its stressful moments though, he recalled. Support for the goal of international certification was not universal; many guides questioned the value of certification, much less UIAGM membership.

“But enough people saw the value in getting together,” said Pietrasanta. And so, a Board of Directors was organized, along with various committees. They determined the best way to support the profession would be to provide education, training, and credentials based on the already-established international (UIAGM) standards. As well, they would provide support where American guides needed it most—access to public lands, obtaining affordable insurance, and professionalization of the guiding profession.

In 1993, under the leadership of then AMGA Executive Director Steve Young and after discussions with UIAGM President Leo Caminada, the AMGA made its official membership application to the UIAGM. The real work began at this point. Certification standards and examination methods were further refined, and course curricula readied for international observation—all under the watchful eye of the UIAGM.

In the fall of 1997, beneath the shining glaciers of Austria's Grossglockner, the AMGA was admitted as a member of the UIAGM.

MEMBERSHIP

The AMGA's 2700 members are a team of guides and professionals who share similar goals and together shape the future of guiding. As an organization, the collective voice of the profession is strengthened and the momentum of the craft accelerated. Clients, land managers, and outdoor industry leaders look to the AMGA for excellence, support, and viable solutions. By becoming an AMGA Member, one joins a team of guides who share similar professional goals. As an organization, the collective voice of the profession is strengthened and the momentum of the craft accelerated. By joining the AMGA, one becomes a part of the future of guiding.

Members become part of the American Mountain Guides Association in one of two ways:

- **Professional Membership** - This includes any professional who is enrolling in our Climbing Wall Instructor, Single Pitch Instructor, or Guide Track programs or who is affiliated with an Accredited Business;
- **Supporter Membership** – Whether a client, or simply someone who loves being a part of and contributing to the success of America's dynamic mountain community. This membership is donation based and 100% tax deductible.

Partners

AMGA guides succeed because of AMGA partner's financial assistance, which pays for scholarships, programs, and many other AMGA initiatives. These partnerships also put the organization in a strong position to advocate for access for the guided public with land managers, legislators, and other industry partners. These partners are comprised of a mixture of outdoor industry brands and private donors. Key brand partnerships include; Gore-tex, Marmot, Arc'teryx, Dynafit, fiveten, Osprey Packs, and many more.

PROGRAMS & ACCREDITATION:

The AMGA maintains the high standards of professionalism expected in American guiding and climbing instruction. The AMGA offers more than 300 internationally recognized training courses, exams, and certifications designed to certify individual guides and climbing instructors and accredit climbing and skiing services. In 2012, 1,000+ students took a course through the AMGA's 250+ climbing instructor programs, and 250 students took the 30+ guide track programs.

AMGA Climbing Instructor Program:

The AMGA Climbing Instructor Program consists of three certification streams: Rock Instructor, Climbing Wall Instructor, and Single Pitch Instructor. The Climbing Instructor Program is intended for individuals who facilitate climbing experiences, instruct climbing skills, and/or monitor climbing activities.

SPI and CWI courses are offered year-round all over the United States. If there is a crag or climbing gym nearby, there is a very good chance that there is also an AMGA SPI or CWI Provider in the vicinity. SPI and CWI Providers have been vetted, trained, and licensed by the AMGA to offer these courses and certifications. All Providers hold AMGA certification and most hold multiple certifications. Along with being skilled technicians, they are also among the best educators in the business.

AMGA Mountain Guide Programs:

AMGA Mountain Guide Programs train and certify working and aspiring Guides. AMGA programs consist of three disciplines: Rock, Alpine, and Ski. Individuals can get certified in one, two, or all three disciplines. If one becomes certified in all three disciplines, one becomes an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide.



The Rock Guide Program consists of three programs: the Rock Guide Course, the Advanced Rock Guide Course and Aspirant Exam, and the Rock Guide Exam.



The Alpine Guide Program consists of four programs: the Alpine Guide Course, the Ice Instructor Course, the Advanced Alpine Guide Course and Aspirant Exam, and the Alpine Guide Exam.



The Ski Guide Program consists of three programs: the Ski Guide Course, the Advanced Ski Guide Course and Aspirant Exam, and the Ski Guide Exam.



If you become certified in all three disciplines, you become an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide.

Accreditation:

Established in 1986, the AMGA Accreditation Program endorses guide services, climbing programs, and/or school or university outdoor programs that offer climbing instruction, guided climbing, or skiing services. Accreditation provides a consistent standard for judging the reliability and professionalism of a climbing service by ensuring it:

- Conforms to industry standards;
- Guarantees rigorous and uniform guide training;
- Is compliant with state and federal law;
- Promotes ethical business practices.

ADVOCACY

AMGA's credentialed guides are trained in public safety, stewardship and client enjoyment of our public lands. Guides enable members of the public to mitigate the inherent risks it requires to explore and understand the natural environment of the mountains. It is the purpose of the AMGA's advocacy effort to persuade both land managers and our elected officials that AMGA credentialed guides and guide services provide a quantifiable level of professional risk management that should be the basis for permitting in the U.S. AMGA's specific goals are to:

- Preserve existing guiding access across the United States.
- Preserve existing venues and obtain new access for AMGA programs.
- Open new opportunities for access for AMGA accredited businesses and certified guides.
- Facilitate opportunities for international IFMGA guides to do business in the United States.

THE OPPORTUNITY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The AMGA's reputation comes in part from the rigor and high standards of its instruction. But these do not make it iconic. The AMGA is iconic because of its long history of partnership with the most capable people and businesses in American Climbing and from a vast collective knowledge of America's great ranges and climbing destinations. The AMGA started professional American guiding. They know it like no one else. The next Executive Director of AMGA will have an opportunity to take the helm of this vibrant and respected organization and lead it to the next level. The Executive Director for AMGA is an individual who has that unique skill of respecting the past while shaping a vital future. We seek an individual with proven leadership skills who can continue to grow and strengthen the organization.

There has been a perception that the AMGA has competing interests between the wants and needs of individual guides versus those of guide services. While it is important to communicate clear mission and address this question, the solution to the problem of who the AMGA is may lie not in deciding on one choice or the other, but providing a vision for how the AMGA creates opportunities for all. We are seeking that articulate leader who can simplify and communicate to the membership base programs and goals that will help the organization move forward on a common path and unified vision that will benefit all of the AMGA membership constituents.

We are seeking a truly passionate individual who can effectively communicate to members the importance of the organization's work, as well as aggressively expand the membership. We are looking for someone who can regularly remind AMGA members why they choose to join and support the AMGA, and how their values are represented daily. The Executive Director will be a consummate leader who has the unique ability to focus on a broad based view of the issues facing the organization while simultaneously executing daily projects.

Collaboration, diplomacy, and the ability to listen to multiple stakeholders representing multiple points of view will be embodied in the new Executive Director. The successful candidate will look back at this time of the AMGA's history as the defining moment where courageous conversations led to the best possible decisions. This is AMGA's time of transformation; creating a unified voice for the organization and a common purpose amongst all the members regardless of personal interests and prejudices. There will be a lot of strong opinions at the table. It is important for the Executive Director to remember that the problem does not necessarily need to be solved for great communication to happen.

We seek an insightful and articulate leader to be the spokesperson and public leader for the organization and the face of the AMGA to the community. She/he must possess outstanding communication skills within the organization, with the member community and the general public. She/he must display excellence in staff and project management, as well as strategic and operational planning. She/he will provide leadership and vision not only for the infrastructure of the organization, but to the entire potential member community. A holistic approach that builds upon success and common purpose will be the key element to develop credibility and trust with all involved.

Ultimately, we are seeking that unique individual who aspires to create a legacy of best practices and growth. The successful candidate will have a professional background characterized by taking on significant challenges and leading change. He/she will possess the ability to inspire the current membership and staff with new ideas and methods of fulfilling the potential of the organization; the Executive Director must prepare the future generations who will join and eventually lead the AMGA.

As mountaineering and climbing are only becoming more popular, the potential is huge to promote a healthy lifestyle and appreciation of wild lands. AMGA has been and continues to be pivotal in restructuring public opinion about guiding.

Personal Characteristics

The Executive Director should demonstrate competence in some or all of the following:

- **Adaptability:** Demonstrate a willingness to be flexible, versatile and/or tolerant in a changing work environment while maintaining effectiveness and efficiency.
- **Behave Ethically:** Understand ethical behavior and business practices, and ensure that own behavior and the behavior of others is consistent with these standards and aligns with the values of the AMGA.
- **Build Relationships:** Establish and maintain positive working relationships with others, both internally and externally, to achieve the goals of the AMGA.
- **Communicate Effectively:** Speak, listen and write in a clear, thorough and timely manner using appropriate and effective communication tools and techniques.
- **Creativity/Innovation:** Develop new and unique ways to improve operations of the AMGA and to create new opportunities.
- **Focus on Membership Needs:** Anticipate, understand, and respond to the needs of internal and external members to meet or exceed their expectations within the AMGA parameters.
- **Foster Teamwork:** Work cooperatively and effectively with others to set goals, resolve problems, and make decisions that enhance AMGA effectiveness.
- **Lead:** Positively influence others to achieve results that are in the best interest of the AMGA.
- **Make Decisions:** Assess situations to determine the importance, urgency and risks, and make clear decisions which are timely and in the best interests of the AMGA.
- **Organize:** Set priorities, develop a work schedule, monitor progress towards goals, and track details, data, information and activities
- **Plan:** Determine strategies to move the AMGA forward, set goals, create and implement actions plans, and evaluate the process and results.
- **Solve Problems:** Assess problem situations to identify causes, gather and process relevant information, generate possible solutions, and make recommendations and/or resolve the problem.
- **Think Strategically:** Assesses options and actions based on trends and conditions in the environment, and the vision and values of the AMGA.

Primary Duties and Responsibilities

Leadership

- Participate with the Board of Directors in developing a vision and strategic plan to guide the AMGA
- Identify, assess, and inform the Board of Directors of internal and external issues that affect the AMGA
- Act as a professional advisor to the Board of Directors on all aspects of the AMGA's activities
- Actively identify and recruit outside professionals to sit on the Board of Directors as Appointed Directors.
- Foster effective team work between the Board and the Executive Director and between the Executive Director and staff including the Instructor and Examiner team
- Act as the spokesperson for the AMGA along with the Chairman of the Board
- Conduct official correspondence on behalf of the Board as appropriate and jointly with the Board when appropriate
- Represent the AMGA at community activities to enhance the AMGA's community profile

Operational Planning and Management

- Develop an operational plan which incorporates goals and objectives that work towards the strategic direction of the AMGA
- Ensure that the operation of the AMGA meets the expectations of its Members, Board and Funders
- Oversee the efficient and effective day-to-day operation of the AMGA
- Draft policies for the approval of the Board and prepare procedures to implement the AMGA policies; review existing policies on an annual basis and recommend changes to the Board as appropriate

- Ensure that personnel, member, donor and volunteer files are securely stored and privacy/confidentiality is maintained
- Provide support to the Board by preparing meeting agenda and supporting materials

Program Planning and Management

- Oversee the planning, implementation and evaluation of the AMGA's programs and services
- Ensure that the programs and services offered by the AMGA contribute to the AMGA's mission and reflect the priorities of the Board
- Monitor the day-to-day delivery of the programs and services of the AMGA to maintain or improve quality
- Oversee the planning, implementation, execution and evaluation of special projects

Human Resources Planning and Management

- Determine staffing requirements for AMGA management and program delivery
- Oversee the implementation of the human resources policies, procedures and practices including the development of job description for all staff
- Establish a positive, healthy and safe work environment in accordance with all appropriate legislation and regulations
- Recruit, interview and select staff that have the right technical and personal abilities to help further the AMGA's mission
- Ensure that all staff receives an orientation to the AMGA and that appropriate training is provided
- Implement a performance management process for all staff which includes monitoring the performance of staff on an on-going basis and conducting an annual performance review
- Coach and mentor staff as appropriate to improve performance
- Discipline staff when necessary using appropriate techniques; release staff when necessary using appropriate and legally defensible procedures

Financial Planning and Management

- Work with staff and the Board (Finance Committee) to prepare a comprehensive budget
- Work with the Board to secure adequate funding for the operation of the AMGA
- Research funding sources, oversee the development of fund raising plans and write funding proposals to increase the funds of the AMGA
- Participate in fundraising activities as appropriate
- Approve expenditures within the authority delegated by the Board
- Ensure that sound bookkeeping and accounting procedures are followed
- Administer the funds of the AMGA according to the approved budget and monitor the monthly cash flow of the AMGA
- Provide the Board with comprehensive, regular quarterly reports on the revenues and expenditure of the AMGA
- Ensure that the AMGA complies with all legislation covering taxation and withholding payments

Community Relations/Advocacy

- Communicate with members to keep them informed of the work of the AMGA and to identify changes in the mountain guiding community
- Establish good working relationships and collaborative arrangements with land managers, funders, politicians, and other climbing or outdoor organizations to help achieve the goals of the AMGA

Risk Management

- Identify and evaluate the risks to the AMGA's people (members, staff, management, volunteers), property, finances, goodwill, and image and implement measures to control risks
- Ensure that the Board of Directors and the AMGA carries appropriate and adequate insurance coverage

- Ensure that the Board and staff understand the terms, conditions and limitations of the insurance coverage

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Knowledge of leadership and management principles as they relate to non-profit organizations
- Knowledge of all federal and provincial legislation applicable to 501-c-3 non profits including: employment standards, human rights, occupational health and safety, charities, taxation, CPP, EI, health coverage etc...
- Knowledge of current challenges and opportunities relating to the mission of the AMGA
- Knowledge of human resources management
- Knowledge of financial management
- Knowledge of project management
- Proficiency in the use of computers for: Word processing, Financial management, E-mail, Internet

Experience

- 5 or more years of progressive management experience in a non profit

Working Conditions

- Executive Directors usually work in an office environment, but the mission of the AMGA may sometimes take them to non standard workplaces.
- Executive Directors work a standard work week, but additionally will often work evening, weekends, and overtime hours to accommodate activities such as Board meetings and representing the AMGA at public events.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Executive Director is responsible for the successful leadership and management of the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) according to the strategic direction set by the Board of Directors.

OFFICERS: Rob Hess-President, Silas Rossi- Vice President, Annie Harrington- Secretary, Scott Soden-Treasurer

DIRECTORS: Sarah Carpenter, Kristin Carpenter-Ogden, Karsten Delap, Grant King, Charles Goldman, Kurt Hicks, Eric Larson, Jason Martin, Marty Molitoris, Dan Nordstrom, Mike Poborsky, Dale Remsberg, Dirk Tyler, Geoff Unger, Margaret Wheeler, Betsy Winter

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All inquiries will be held in strict confidence.

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