



american  
institute for  
conservation

**Preserving Cultural  
Heritage**

## **Member Designation Working Group Membership Designation Proposal**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## General Proposal questions

Q. Is this the final plan?

A. Yes, this is the final plan ready for AIC member vote.

Q. Why were changes needed in the first place?

A. Discussions about possible changes to the AIC professional membership designations have been occurring for many years, probably since the defeat of the certification proposal in 2009. Many members expressed discontent with the meaning, transparency, and significance of the current categories, particularly “Professional Associate.” In addition, changes in the field of conservation and AIC’s increasing awareness of the need for greater equity and inclusion have pointed to the need for changes in our professional designations, as well as a need for AIC to be able to stand behind and promote peer-reviewed members.

Q. Who will approve this plan?

A. The AIC Board has approved this version of the plan so that it can come to AIC members for a vote. In a commitment to inclusive member input, the AIC Board has approved MDWG’s request to open the vote to all individual members of AIC: Fellows, Professional Associates, Associates, Post-Graduates, and Students. A simple majority of votes will determine the outcome.

Q. Will these documents be subject to future review?

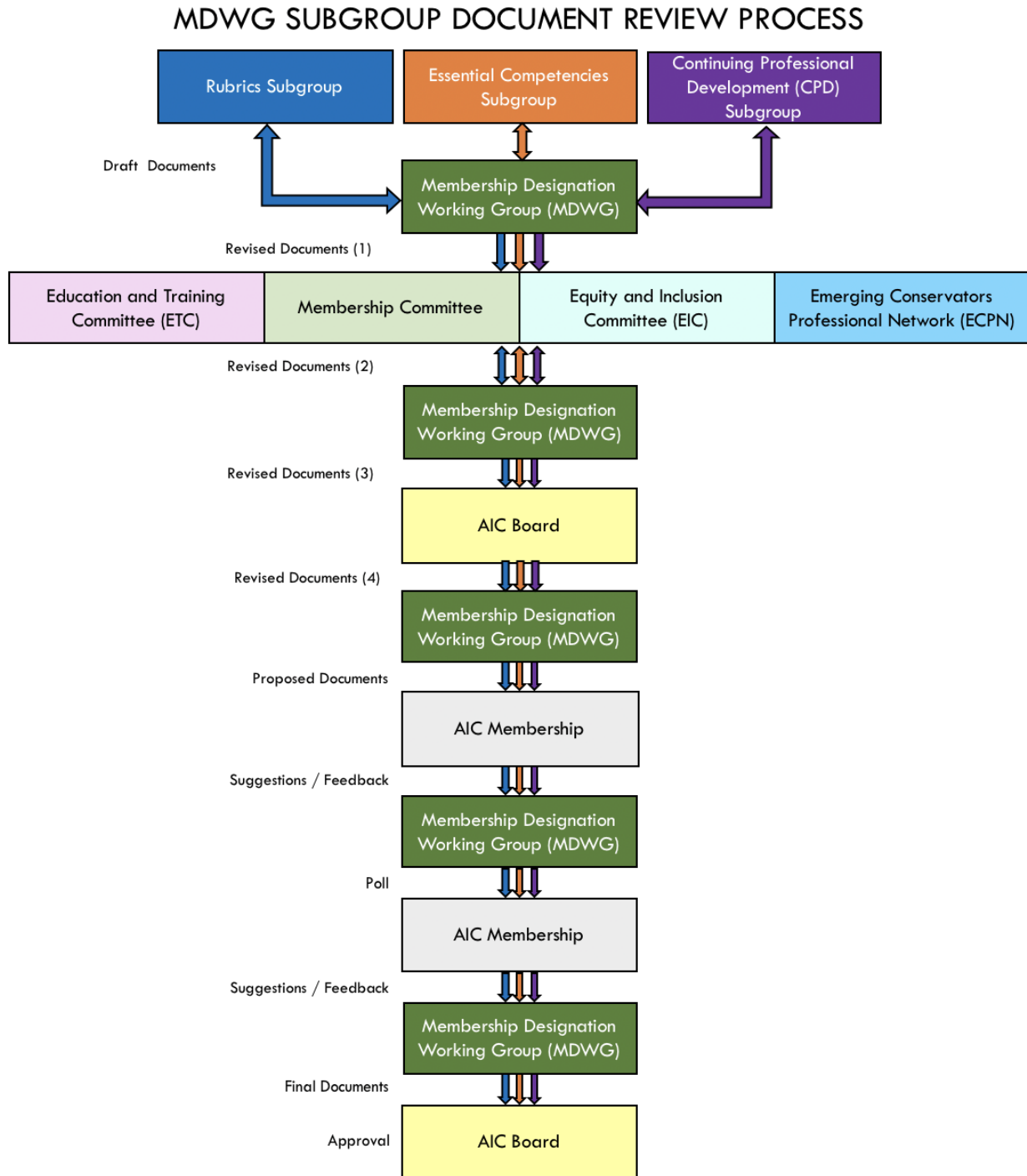
A. Yes, all aspects of this new membership proposal are flexible; they can be adjusted, improved upon, and changed depending on member input and evaluation of the plan over time.

Q: Concerning approving these documents – what do members get to vote on?

A. Following rounds of commentary and review, AIC Members will vote on the implementation of the entire, final Membership Designation Proposal.

AIC members have had, and will have, opportunities to review related documents produced by the MDWG subgroups: Essential Competencies, the Rubric, and the

Continuing Professional Development plan. The Board will have the final approval of these related documents. This is in accordance with AIC’s traditional practice. MDWG encourages members to comment on documents as they are posted for review. The chart below illustrates the flow of all documents produced by MDWG subgroups.



- Q. Will the proposed Membership Designation program affect voting rights?
- A. The proposed program does not address voting rights, as this is not part of the MDWG charge. Voting rights will continue in their present format until changes are made in the AIC Bylaws. The process to propose changes to the AIC Bylaws will begin in early 2022.
- Q. Will adoption of the Membership Designation Proposal require Bylaws changes?
- A. The new names for membership categories (as outlined in the proposal) will require Bylaws changes before they become effective. This would be a separate vote from the one accepting the proposal.
- Q. Will the proposed membership categories cost more?
- A. No. Annual dues will be the same rate for Members, Professional Members, and Fellows. Note that this is true in our current structure as well; there is no dues increase for being a PA or Fellow.
- Q. Will there still be discounts for student memberships?
- A. Yes. Retirees also qualify for discounted rates.
- Q. What about the current Associate member designation?
- A. The Associate designation will be renamed AIC Member. As stated in the AIC Bylaws, it will remain open to “any person who has shown an interest in the purposes for which AIC is organized, without regard to race, gender, age, color, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, marital status, ethnic or national origin.”
- Q. What will happen to my current Professional Associate (PA) or Fellow designation?
- A. AIC members currently holding a PA designation will become “AIC Professional Member (PM)”. Members currently holding the Fellow designation will be given the new designation of “AIC Professional Member and Fellow”. All Professional Members will be expected to abide by the maintenance requirements of the new PM designation in order to maintain it.
- Q. What is the current status and process/procedure regarding PA and Fellow applications?
- A. Until these changes are adopted, the current process for becoming a PA or Fellow remains as it has always been. You can find more information [here](#).
- Q. What about certification?
- A. The Membership Designation Proposal does not include a specific certification component. However, the recommended plan is modeled on certification and membership plans of similar organizations, and seeks to balance application rigor with fairness, accessibility, and accountability. All of these issues were repeatedly mentioned in previous certification discussions and MDWG survey comments.

Q. Were all specialty groups represented on MDWG?

A. MDWG and its subgroups include members from many geographic locations, types of workplaces, types of training, and specialties; there is also a wide range of time in the field. When each sub-group began, MDWG issued a call for volunteers from all of AIC's membership. Over 20 members were part of the sub-groups for the Competencies review/revision. Additionally, MDWG works closely with AIC's Education and Training, Equity and Inclusion, and Membership Committees and communicates with all the SGs via the Internal Advisory Group (IAG) in person or in video calls and via the IAG online community.

Q: Is AIC planning on doing a marketing campaign to promote this?

A. Yes. Before the new system is publicized outside of AIC, the proposal will need to be approved by members, and Bylaws changes enacted.

## Professional Associate / AIC Professional Member questions

Q. What will the benefits of Professional Membership be?

A. Benefits of being an AIC Professional Member include listing in the professional services location tool (commonly known as Find A Professional) promoting public awareness of the member's active peer-reviewed designation, recognition in member profile and at annual meeting via designation ribbon, use of marks (logo), priority consideration in applications for select Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC) professional development and funding opportunities, and leadership opportunities. Responsibilities include adherence to both the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice and continued professional development.

Q. How will the application process be different from the current PA application?

A. The application process has been revised to support increased equity and transparency, using a rubric format to ensure consistency in evaluating applications. As the field of conservation has continually evolved and changed, so has the membership of AIC. Recognizing this, applicants will choose one of the following pathways under which to apply for professional designation: Treatment, Preventive Care, or Scientific Principles, Analysis & Examination, thus allowing their applications to be tailored to their particular areas of training and expertise. Note that the pathway will only be used to tailor the application, and will not be part of the member designation once awarded.

Q. How will the Essential Competencies document be used in the PM application process?

A. The 2021 Essential Competencies provide an outline of the basic competencies that define an AIC professional member. There are nine foundation competencies which are broadly shared among all members, and three practice competencies which are more specific to different skill sets and expertise, which have individual descriptions according to the three pathways described above. AIC members applying for Professional Member designation determine which pathway best suits their individual skill set, using the

definitions described in the Essential Competencies document, and tailor their application accordingly.

Q. What is a rubric? Who uses it?

A. In education terminology, rubric means "a scoring guide used to evaluate the quality of students' constructed responses." In the conservation/arts worlds, funding agencies use rubrics to guide evaluators' responses to an application. The PM application rubrics provide a template on which applicants can model their narratives to demonstrate that they have met the Essential Competencies. Sponsors use the rubrics to ensure that members they are sponsoring satisfy the application requirements. Finally, the rubrics will be used by evaluators to assess an applicant's knowledge of the Essential Competencies.

Q. How are sponsor requirements different for the new Professional Member application?

A. In the new proposed application, sponsors will be anonymous to the Membership Committee and reviewers who evaluate the candidates' applications. Sponsor letters of reference will be replaced by a statement asserting that the Sponsor (a Professional Member of AIC) has reviewed the application materials and supports the candidate in attaining Professional designation. This system is less onerous for Sponsors, but still ensures that they play a mentorship role in helping candidates prepare their applications. This change was made in response to suggestions from survey respondents and addresses the concern that candidates should be evaluated on the basis of their own demonstrated abilities and not based on who sponsors them.

Q. What if applicants work in areas where there are not a lot of conservators who could act as sponsors?

A. Sponsors do not need to be someone with whom the applicant has worked directly. Sponsors will mentor and work with the applicant using the Essential Competencies and Rubric, to become familiar with the applicant's work. The current system of a pool of PAs and Fellows willing to act as sponsors will continue. AIC can help link an applicant with a Professional Member who has agreed to serve as a volunteer sponsor.

Q. Who will evaluate the applications for the professional membership categories?

A. The Membership Committee will evaluate and make decisions on all applications. They may designate additional, trained reviewers to ensure that every application is reviewed by Professional Members within the applicant's pathway (Treatment, Preventive Care, or Scientific Principles, Analysis, and Examination) and specialty, in the case of Treatment.

Q. Will the proposal accommodate applications for more than one of the three pathways?

A. The concept of the three pathways has generated a lot of comments. The proposal asks applicants to apply in one of the three pathways so that the applicant can best tailor their application to their particular training and expertise. The Essential Competencies and Rubrics show how much overlap there is in the pathways. These pathways will only be

used in the application process and will not be part of the designation name or professional services location tool.

Q. Why is having a graduate degree not considered enough experience to be a professional member? Why the two-year requirement?

A. The main reason for the two-year requirement is that there are a lot of differences in master's degree programs – differences in number of years and differences in how much time is spent in coursework and hands-on experience. This question has also generated a lot of discussion. The proposal calls for “two years of professional experience,” without specifying when it occurs. This recognizes that some people have professional experience in the field before entering a graduate program.

Q. Will there still be a requirement to sign our core documents?

A. Yes. Professional Members will be required to sign that they abide by and will continue to abide by the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice. This will not change.

Q. Will there be a way to appeal a decision made about one's professional member application?

A. Following the review, if an application is denied, the Membership Committee will prepare a narrative outlining the applicant's strengths, areas for growth, and process for reapplication.

Q. What is the process for transitioning from Professional Associate to Professional Member?

A. Following acceptance of the new membership designation structure through member vote, and upon any necessary Bylaws changes, current AIC Professional Associates in good standing will become AIC Professional Members (PM).

## AIC Fellow questions

Q. How is the “Fellow” category changing? Why?

A. Fellow is changing from being a “next step” from (current) PA to a separate recognition intended to emphasize and recognize a Professional Member's dedication to the field. As proposed, “Fellow of AIC” will be a recognition of a Professional Member's service to the field, rather than a higher professional designation.

Q. How is the application process changing?

A. An applicant for Fellow of AIC must be a Professional Member for 5 years and show engagement with the field for at least 12 years. Professional Members may nominate themselves to be a Fellow, or other Fellows can propose a Professional Member for Fellow. Section 3.3 of the MDWG proposal outlines the nomination and submission process. Review of Fellow nominees will be done by the Membership Committee. Current Fellows will continue to be notified of the committee's intent to recognize a Fellow and will have 30 days for comment.

Q: Why will it be easier to become a Fellow?

A. It will not be easier to qualify to become a Fellow. It will, however, be an easier process to become a Fellow. Very few people apply for Fellow and, in part, this seems to be from the amount of time it takes for the current application process.

Q: Will someone with a lot of experience be able to apply directly for AIC Fellow designation if they are not already a Professional Member?

A. No. The requirement for Fellow designation is to be a Professional Member for at least 5 years and to be engaged with the field for 12 years.

Q: Do Fellows need to continue to do CPD?

A. Fellows who are actively working should retain their Professional Member designation and thus will still need to do CPD. These members will be known as “AIC Professional Member and Fellow.” Fellows who are no longer active (i.e., retired) would not retain the Professional Member designation and thus would not need to continue CPD. They would still be recognized as a “Fellow of AIC.”

Q: Would the AIC Board President and Vice President still need to be a Fellow in the new proposal?

A. Changes to the membership requirements of the AIC Board President and Vice President would require a change of our bylaws and are outside of the MDWG’s charge. The AIC Board of Directors may propose that a change to the Fellow requirement for the AIC President and Vice President be made in the next Bylaws revision process.

## Continuing Professional Development questions

Q. What is CPD?

A. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the process of acquiring and maintaining the skills, knowledge, and experience of a professional.

The range of activities in the list of Examples of CPD Activities is intended to provide guidance to maintaining Professional Member designation in AIC, without imposing undue financial burden or unreasonable time demands on Professional Members.

Q. I invested in my education and now have years of experience in conservation. Why do I need CPD now?

A. The reason for CPD as a requirement for maintaining Professional Member designation is to encourage and ensure active participation and continued learning in the field. CPD provides opportunities to actively engage in the advancement of our profession through the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and experiences.

Membership surveys carried out during MDWG’s research and in previous certification discussions showed a strong desire among AIC members for CPD, a common feature of many professional membership organizations in our allied fields. Requiring CPD is a way

to recognize the work PMs already do, and strengthens AIC's ability to promote the designation.

- Q. What types of activities will be considered continuing professional development credits?
- A. MDWG proposes that CPD will be organized in three major categories: Learning and skill development, Teaching and disseminating information, and Service and outreach. A variety of activities will be included, so that members can attain CPD credits that fit within their time and budget constraints. If a PM participates in an activity that is not listed on this document, they can add their own activity.
- Q. Will the continuing professional development activities cost money?
- A. There will be many eligible CPD activities that can be completed at no cost.
- Q. How many CPD activities do I need to complete to maintain Professional Member designation?
- A. Professional Members must report a minimum of ten CPD activities within a five-year cycle (with at least one activity in each of the three categories). In addition, once per CPD cycle, Professional Members will be required to complete an online refresher on professional ethics.
- Q. How often will I need to complete continuing professional development activities?
- A. The proposal creates a five-year cycle for CPD.
- Q. How do I record/submit my CPD activities?
- A. Members will use AIC's Learning platform (our Learning Management System, or LMS) to submit information on activities they have completed. CPD activities can be submitted as they are completed. Members will be able to track their own activities throughout the five-year cycle/period. Clear instructions will be provided.
- Q. Can I count a single activity in multiple categories?
- A. No, credit for a single CPD activity can only be counted in one category per CPD cycle.
- Q. Can I complete an activity more than once in a CPD cycle?
- A. Yes, you may complete an activity more than once, as long as you meet the distribution requirements across the categories per cycle.
- Q. What if an activity I completed is not included in the list of examples of CPD activities?
- A. If a Professional Member participates in an activity that does not correspond to an activity listed on the examples list, they will select "Add your own".
- Q. Where can I get ideas for CPD activities?
- A. A new Member Community group could be created for AIC members to share suggestions for, and resources about, CPD activities. This forum would be moderated by member volunteers.



- Q. Can I count activities for which I receive an honorarium or stipend?
- A. Yes, if you receive an honorarium or stipend for your service, you may still count it as CPD activity.
- Q. Can I count activities I do on “work” time?
- A. The CPD plan does not require PMs to track when the CPD activity takes place.
- Q. If I have professional requirements for another professional organization, can I count activity in that system and in the AIC system?
- A. Yes. CPD activities earned for another professional organization can be counted towards AIC requirements.
- Q. What happens if I don’t complete my CPD by the deadline?
- A. There is a sixty-day grace period for completing CPD. If a member has not met the requirements by sixty days after the five-year deadline, their name will be removed from AIC’s online guide to professional services tool until they have completed their requirements. An extension may be requested if members are experiencing extenuating circumstances which prevent completion of CPD in the sixty-day grace period.
- Q. Do Fellows need to complete CPD?
- A. Fellows wishing to maintain their Professional Membership designation must complete CPD (see Membership Designation Proposal Section 3.5).