



american
institute for
conservation

**Preserving Cultural
Heritage**

Membership Designation Proposal

Frequently Asked Questions

General

Q. Is this the final plan?

A. No, the *MDWG 2nd Draft Proposal* is a document outlining MDWG's ideas based on research and member input. Depending on member response to this draft, MDWG may continue to edit this proposal.

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?

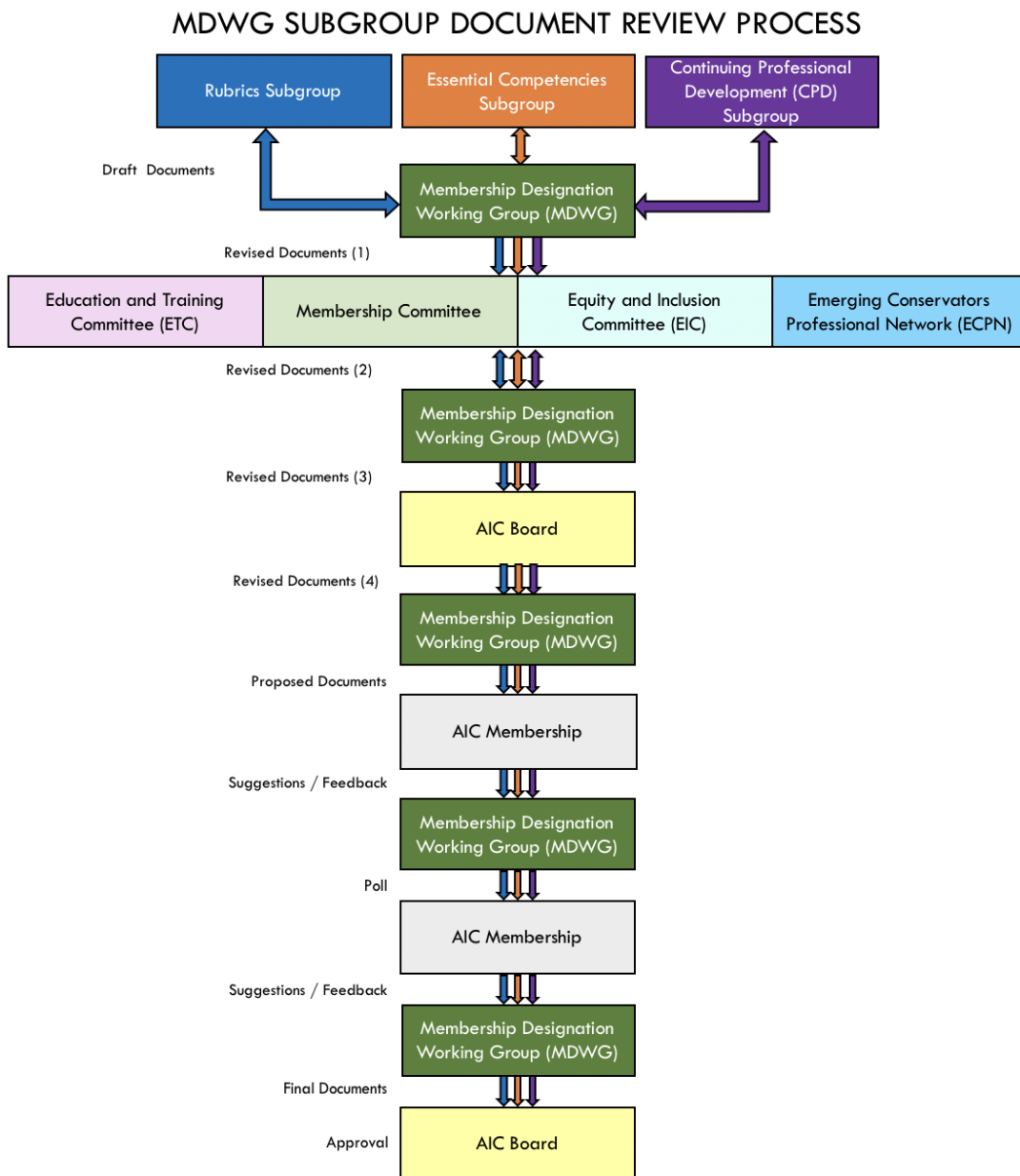
A. The AIC Board will approve the plan once it is finalized, then, AIC members will vote on the plan. In a commitment to inclusive member input, the AIC Board has approved MDWG's request to open the vote to all individual members of AIC: Fellows, Professional Associates, Associates, Post Graduates and Students. A simple majority of votes will determine the outcome.

Q. Will these documents be subject to future review?

A. Yes, at the discretion of the AIC Board, the Essential Competencies, Rubrics, and CPD plan may be reviewed and revised in the future.

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 MDWG 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. After members comment, 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:

Fellows and PAs: Fellows and PAs are entitled to vote on the election of officers, directors, and members of the nominating committee as well as amendments to the bylaws. (In the new format, this will apply to Fellows and Professional Members)

Associates: Associates have the right to vote for officers, directors, and members of the nominating committee. In 1996, AIC News reported on the continuing dialog regarding AIC membership structure. It was noted that only 26% of membership had voting rights. In 1997, during the annual member business meeting, Associates were given the right to vote for officers, directors, and members of the nominating committee. The vote was nearly unanimous. (In the new format, this will apply to Members)

The AIC Board of Directors can request votes on other issues by Fellows and PAs (Fellows and PMs) or they can request a vote that includes Associates (Members) and Student and Post-Graduate Members.

Institutional Members Institutional members have no voting rights.

- Q. Will adoption of the MDWG membership Designation Proposal require Bylaws changes?
- A. The new names for membership designation categories (as outlined in the proposal) will require Bylaws changes before they become effective. PA and Fellow members vote on Bylaws changes. 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.

- 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 or Fellow designation?

A. AIC members currently holding a PA or Fellow designation will be given the equivalent new designation when the plan is implemented, and will be expected to abide by the maintenance requirements of that new designation in order to maintain it.

Q. Until these changes are adopted, what is the status and process/procedures regarding PA and Fellowship applications?

A: 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 Draft 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. Will the results of the surveys be presented with the publication of the new draft?

A. The first survey, which gave an overview of member concerns, is available in the Member Community Library: go to the “membership” folder, then to the “Member Designation” sub-folder. Other smaller targeted surveys were meant as internal tools to aid in crafting the proposal, together with personal interviews and collected comments. The information gleaned from these smaller surveys is incorporated in the drafts of the proposal, and will not be posted separately.

Q. Are all specialty groups represented on MDWG? Can you confirm that a member of each specialty group is represented on the 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 number of years in the field. All members of AIC can connect to MDWG’s work in a variety of ways. 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, ECPN? CIPP? and communicates with all of the SGs via IAG (in person and via the Higher Logic IAG community). Finally, all MDWG drafts are presented to the full membership for review and comment.

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

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

Membership Categories

Q. What will the benefits of Professional Membership be?

A. Benefits of being an AIC Professional Member include listing in the online guide to professional services (commonly known as “Find An Expert”), 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 and logo, priority consideration in applications for select Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC) professional development and funding opportunities, and leadership opportunities.

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 profile of AIC. Recognizing this, applicants will choose one of the following categories under which to apply for professional designation: Conservation, Preservation, and Scientific Analysis, thus allowing their applications to be tailored to their particular areas of training and expertise.

Q. Please define Rubric.

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 rubric is a list of information that applicants have been asked to include. Evaluators use a rubric to decide if/how well the information has been provided.

Q. Who uses the rubric?

A. The rubrics provide a template on which applicants can model their narratives to demonstrate that they have met the Essential Competencies. Sponsors can 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 status. 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. The current system of a volunteer pool of PA and Fellows willing to act as sponsors will continue. Sponsors do not need to be someone with whom the applicant has worked directly. 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 designate two reviewers to ensure that every application is reviewed by Professional Members within the applicant's category (Conservation, Preservation, Scientific Analysis), and specialty in the case of Conservation. Professional Members may volunteer to be part of a pool of reviewers, who will be trained in reviewing applications and will work with the Membership Committee. The Membership Committee intercedes if there is not consensus among the reviewers, and will continue to award the membership categories.

Q. Will the proposal accommodate applications and or designations for more than one of the three categories (Conservation, Preservation, or Scientific Analysis)?

A. The concept of the three categories has generated a lot of comments. The current proposal asks applicants to apply in one of the three categories 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 categories. The current plan is that these categories will only be used in the application process and will not be part of the online referral tool.

Q. Why is having a graduate degree not considered enough experience to be a professional member? Why the 2 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 current 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. Members whose application is denied will be given feedback concerning their application, and will be able to reapply, as is current practice. The rubric based on the updated Essential Competencies will make the applicant's strengths and weaknesses clearer to the sponsor, applicant, and those evaluating the applications.

Q. What is the process for transitioning from Professional Associate to Professional Member? Why do I need to choose a category?

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 Professional Members. PAs transitioning to Professional Members will choose a category (Conservation, Preservation, Scientific Analysis) for the sole purpose of being able to be identified as a future reviewer or sponsor.

Fellows

Q. How is the "Fellow" category changing? Why?

A. Fellow is changing from being a "next step" from (current) PA to a separate designation that is intended to emphasize and recognize a Professional Member's dedication to the field. A person may be both a Fellow and a Professional Member by keeping up with the CPD requirements. Or, someone who is no longer actively practicing may choose to be just a Fellow and not have the CPD requirements.

The application process for Fellow will change to a recognition by one's peers of accomplishments and contributions that have had a significant impact on AIC and the field. Professional Members will be able to nominate themselves to be a Fellow, or other Fellows can propose a Professional Member for Fellow. Section 3.3 of the MDWG draft 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 elect a Fellow and will have 30 days for comment.

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 bylaws change, and are outside of the MDWG's charge. The AIC Board of Directors is considering proposing that a change to the Fellow requirement for the AIC President and Vice President be made in the next Bylaws revision process.

Q: What are the proposed requirements to become a Fellow, and what exactly does it mean in the new proposed context?

A. The draft proposal says that an applicant for Fellow must be a: "A Professional Member for 5 years and (show) engagement with the field for at least 12 years." As proposed, Fellow will be more of an honorific recognizing a Professional Member's service to the field, rather than recognizing a higher professional designation. In other words, Professional Member would be the "terminal degree."

Q: Do Fellows need to continue to do CPD?

A. The draft proposal says that Fellows who are actively working will retain their Professional Member designation and thus will still need to do CPD. These members will be known as "AIC Fellow and Professional Member." Fellows who are no longer active (i.e. retired), would not need to continue CPD and would not retain the Professional Member designation.

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.

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 status 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 sharing of unique situations, knowledge and experience.

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. Part of being an active conservator and abiding by AIC's Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice requires staying current in your field of expertise. Requiring CPD is a way to recognize the work PMs already do, and provide a better basis for AIC to stand behind the designation.

AIC is committed to elevating the conservation profession, and being able to publicly declare that our members choose to participate in CPD will further this mission.

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 with a short written justification.

Q. Will the continuing professional development activities cost money?

A. There will be many eligible CPD activities that can be completed for free/no cost.

Q. How many CPD activities do I need to complete to maintain Professional Member designation?

A. In proposed "System A", Professional Members must accrue and self-report a minimum of 15 credits of CPD activities within a five-year cycle (with at least one credit in each of the three categories). In addition, once per CPD cycle, Professional Members will be required to complete an online Ethics Refresher.

In proposed "System B", Professional Members must self-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 Ethics Refresher.

- Q. How often will I need to complete continuing professional development activities?
- A. The current proposal creates a five-year cycle for CPD.
- Q. How do I record/submit my CPD activities?
- A. Members will use AIC's Elevate platform 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 cycle/period.
- 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 CPD Credit Table ("System A") or Examples of CPD Activity ("System B")?
- A. If a Professional Member participates in an activity that does not correspond to an activity listed on the Credit Table or Examples list, they will select "Add your own", and submit a short written explanation.
- Q. In "System A", what if I think my activity merits more credits than are allocated in the credits table?
- A. A Professional Member who thinks more credits should be allocated based on time, resources and/or a perceived higher value to the individual or field should provide a written explanation.
- 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 system 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 Draft Membership Designation Proposal Section 3.5).