



American Academy  
for Park and Recreation Administration

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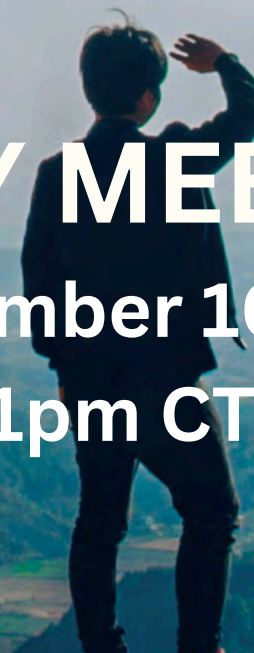
# Welcome Academy

APEX ASCENT: ELEVATING THE CLIMB, DEFINING THE PEAK

ALL ACADEMY MEETING

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

11am PT | 12pm MT | 1pm CT | 2pm ET







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Elizabeth S. Kessler, MBA, CPRE, President (Trail Name: Artemis)  
Executive Director, McHenry County Conservation District

Trailhead Meet-Up  
Meet Your Fellow  
Academy Adventurers,  
Trail Angels & Trail Guides





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## **Today's Agenda**

- **Apex Ascent: Mapping Our Route**
  - **Historical Background**
  - **Recommendations**
  - **Campfire Conversations & Trailblazer Takeaways**
- **Next Steps - Critical Path**
  - **What's Ahead**
  - **How to Get Involved**







# American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration

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## Mission

An Academy of distinguished park and recreation administrators, scholars committed to research, professional development and the use of best practices.

## Vision

To inspire, influence and advance the Park and Recreation Profession.

## Values

**Leadership:** We are viewed as thoughtful leaders and as a resource for the profession.

**Impactful:** We use our collective wisdom and experience to improve the parks and recreation profession.

**Innovative and Progressive:** We are a learning community that embodies continuous improvement within the changing needs of the profession.

**Belonging:** We commit to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion by actively seeking to create safe, secure, and supportive environments.





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## Pledge

AAPRA commits to promote, nourish, and embody an inclusive and equitable environment, strengthen our commitment to promote justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, combat systemic and structural racism, and promote a culture of equality for all, through our knowledge advancement, research, education and scholarly efforts.

We commit to:

- reveal relevant opportunities
- elevate equity
- activate diversity
- lead inclusively





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**So...  
What IS  
the  
Academy?**





# Building A Strong Foundation



**Frank Vaydik**  
Director, Kansas City, MO  
*Convened First Meeting of AAPRA*



**Mary Grogan**  
Director, Modesta, CA  
*Founding Member  
NRPA & CPRS President*



**Pauline desGranges**  
Director, San Diego, CA  
*Founding Member*



**Richard Trudeau**  
East Bay Regional Park  
District, Oakland CA  
*Founding Member*

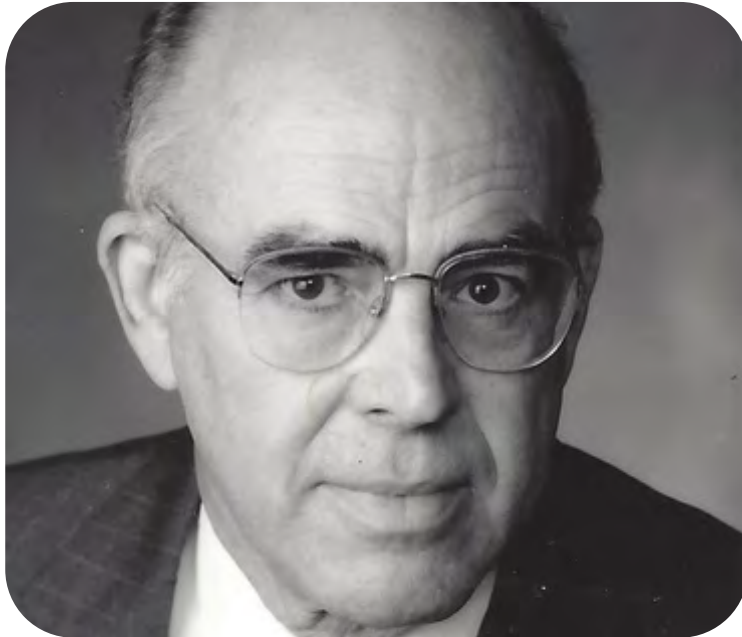


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# Trail Guides



**Robert F. Toalson**

Champaign Park District, IL  
**AAPRA Executive Director**  
**1985-1997**  
*The Foundation Rock*



**John Potts**

Champaign County  
Forest Preserve District, IL  
**AAPRA Executive Director**  
**1998-2009**  
*The Shaping Rock*



**Richard Grodsky**

Executive Director,  
Elmhurst Park District, IL  
**AAPRA Executive Director**  
**2009 - 2015**  
*The Keystone*



**Jane Adams**

Executive Director, CPRS, CA  
**AAPRA Executive Director**  
**2016 - Present**  
*The Stepping Stone*



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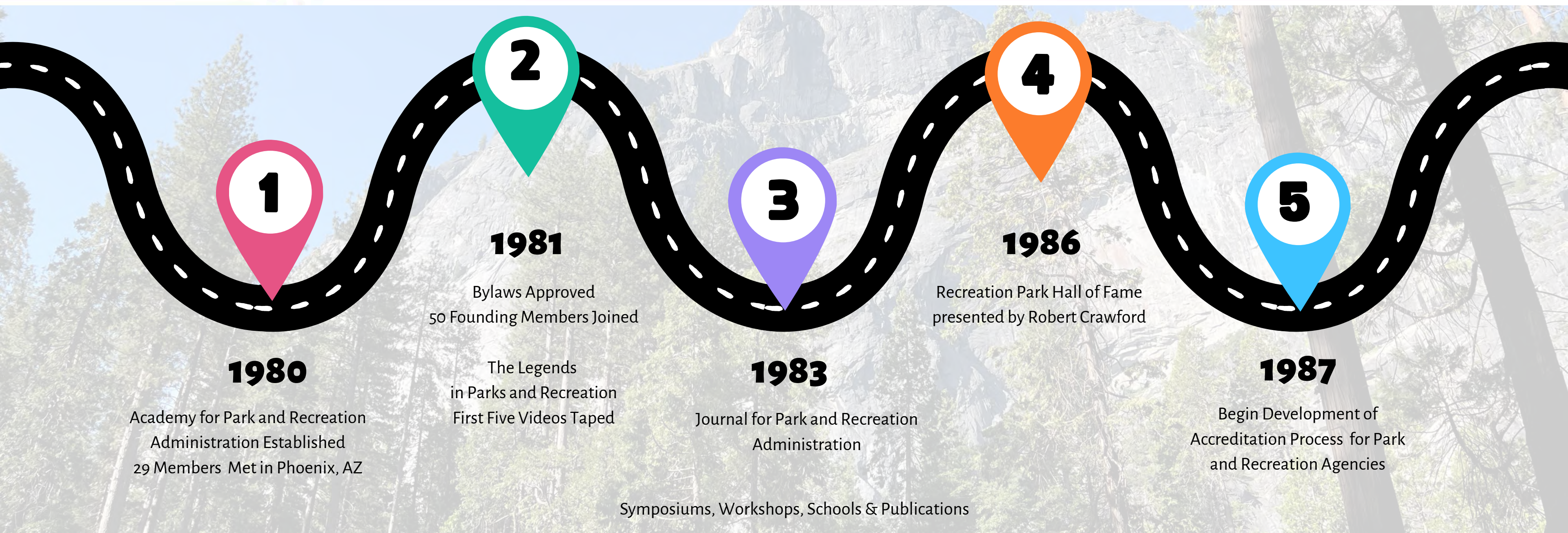
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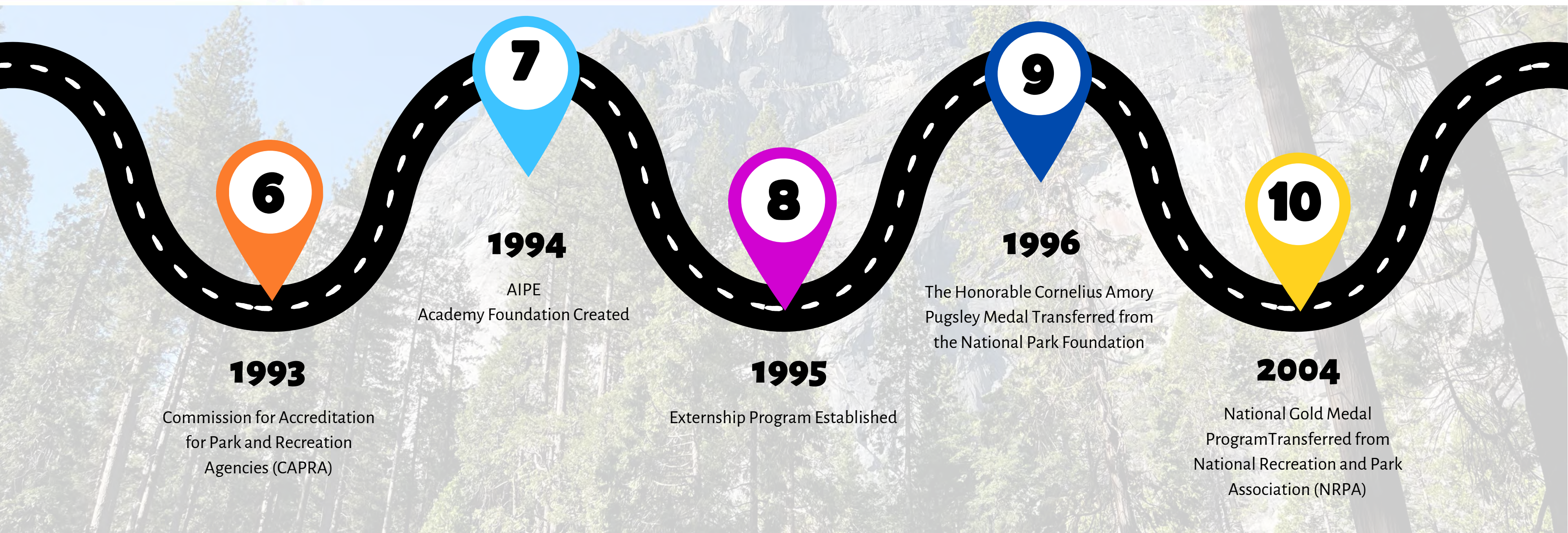
# MILESTONES





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## MILESTONES





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## MILESTONES



# Building A Strong Foundation It's All About the Rocks



**1980**  
**Rock Solid Start**



**2020**  
**40 Years**



**2021**  
**Keystone Moment**



**2025**  
**The Ascent Ahead**



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The background image is a vibrant photograph of a river. The river flows through a landscape filled with numerous smooth, rounded rocks of various colors (grey, brown, tan). The water is clear, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. In the background, there are rolling hills or mountains under a clear blue sky. The banks are lined with tall grasses and shrubs. The overall scene is bright and natural.

# APEX ASCENT

Elevating the Climb, Defining the Peak





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## Today's Trail Guides

### Board of Directors

- Elizabeth S. Kessler, MBA, CPRE, President
- Jodie Adams, CPRP, PTR, PPR, President-Elect
- Cindie Sullivan, CPRP, Past President
- Michael J. Kalvort, CPRE, Treasurer
- Stacey Laird Dicke, CPRP, Secretary
- Stacie Anaya, CPRP
- Rick Atkins, CPRP
- Darrell Crittendon, CPRP
- Deb Jordan, Re.D.
- Bernita Reese, M.S., CPRP
- Dina Trunzo, CTRS

### Independent Contractors

- Jane H. Adams, Executive Director
- Brit Kramer, CAE, Red Barn Communications, LLC
- Shelley Dahle, Red Barn Communications, LLC

### Sustainability Task Force

- Elizabeth S. Kessler, MBA, CPRE, President
- Michael J. Kalvort, CPRE, Treasurer
- Robert Armistead, CPRE
- Janet Bartnik, CPRP (President 22-23)
- Michael Klitzing, CPRP

### Executive Committee

- Elizabeth S. Kessler, MBA, CPRE, President
- Jodie Adams, CPRP, PTR, PPR, President-Elect
- Cindie Sullivan, CPRP, Past President
- Michael J. Kalvort, CPRE, Treasurer
- Stacey Laird Dicke, CPRP, Secretary
- Jane H. Adams, Executive Director, Ex-Officio

### Conversations That Matter: Master Class Series

- Tracey M. Crawford, CPRP, CTRS (President 23-24);  
CTM Task Force Chair







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## COMMITTEE - TASK FORCE LEADERSHIP

### INNOVATION

- NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL
  - Chair: Stacey Laird Dicke, CPRP (26-27)
  - Vice Chair: Michael Kies, CPRE (26-27)
- CAPRA
  - Committee Members
- CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER
  - Chair: Tracey M. Crawford, CTRS, CPRP
  - Vice Chair: Tara Eggleston-Stewart, CPRE

### PREPARE FUTURE LEADERS

- CAREER DEVELOPMENT
  - Chair: M. Jean Keller
  - Vice Chair: Karen Hesser, CPRP
- EXTERN
  - Chair: William (Bill) McAdam, CPRP
  - Vice Chair: Anthony (Tony) Lopez, CPRE
- JEDI
  - Chair: Roslyn Johnson, CPRP
  - Co-Chair: Lisa Sheppard, CPRP
- MENTORING
  - Chair: Nancy Kaiser, CPRP
  - Vice Chair: Tara Gee, CPRP

### PREPARE FUTURE LEADERS

- LEGENDS
  - Chair: Christine (Chris) Dropinski, CPRP (25-26)
  - Vice Chair: Dr. Melissa Weddell (25-26)

### SUPPORT & SOCIALIZE RESEARCH

- BEST PAPER
  - Chair: Christopher (Chris) Beth, CPRP
  - Vice Chair: Dr. Stephanie T. West
- RESEARCH FOR THE PROFESSION
  - Chair: Dr. Denise Anderson
  - Vice Chair: Dr. Ellen Drogin Rodgers





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## COMMITTEE - TASK FORCE LEADERSHIP

### ACKNOWLEDGE STEWARDS & DOERS

- PUGSLEY MEDAL
  - Chair: Lewis Ledford
- ROBERT W. CRAWFORD NRPA HALL OF FAME
  - Committee Members

### OPERATING

- MEMBERSHIP
  - Chair: Rebecca A. Benná, CPRP (25, 26-28)
  - Vice Chair: Dr. Michal Anne Lord (24-26)
- BRANDING & SOCIAL MEDIA
  - Chair: Jill Geller, CPRP
  - Vice Chair: Kim Reser, CPRP

### OPERATING

- BYLAWS
  - Chair: Dr. Terry Robertson
  - Co-Chair: Cory Styron, CPRP
- NOMINATING
  - Chair: Cindie Sullivan, CPRP
- NRPA COORDINATION GROUP
  - President: Elizabeth S. Kessler, CPRE
  - President-elect: Jodie Adams, CPRP
- NRPA ADVOCACY COMMITTEE
  - AAPRA Representative: Jason Anselment

### OPERATING

- URBAN DIRECTORS
  - Chair: Michael Kirschman, CPRP
  - Vice-Chair: Crystal R. Ross
- INDUSTRY COUNCIL TASK FORCE
  - Chair: Jodie Adams, CPRP – President-elect
- INVESTMENT TASK FORCE
  - Chair: Michael J. Kalvort, CPRE - Treasurer

### FOUNDATION - APRF

- AMERICAN PARK & RECREATION FOUNDATION
  - President: Chris Nunes, PhD., CPRE
  - Vice President: Jason Anselment





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## MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE & DUES

Membership Year:  
January-December

Dues Invoiced in January  
Payment due within 30 days -  
pay online or with check







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# LISTENING SESSIONS

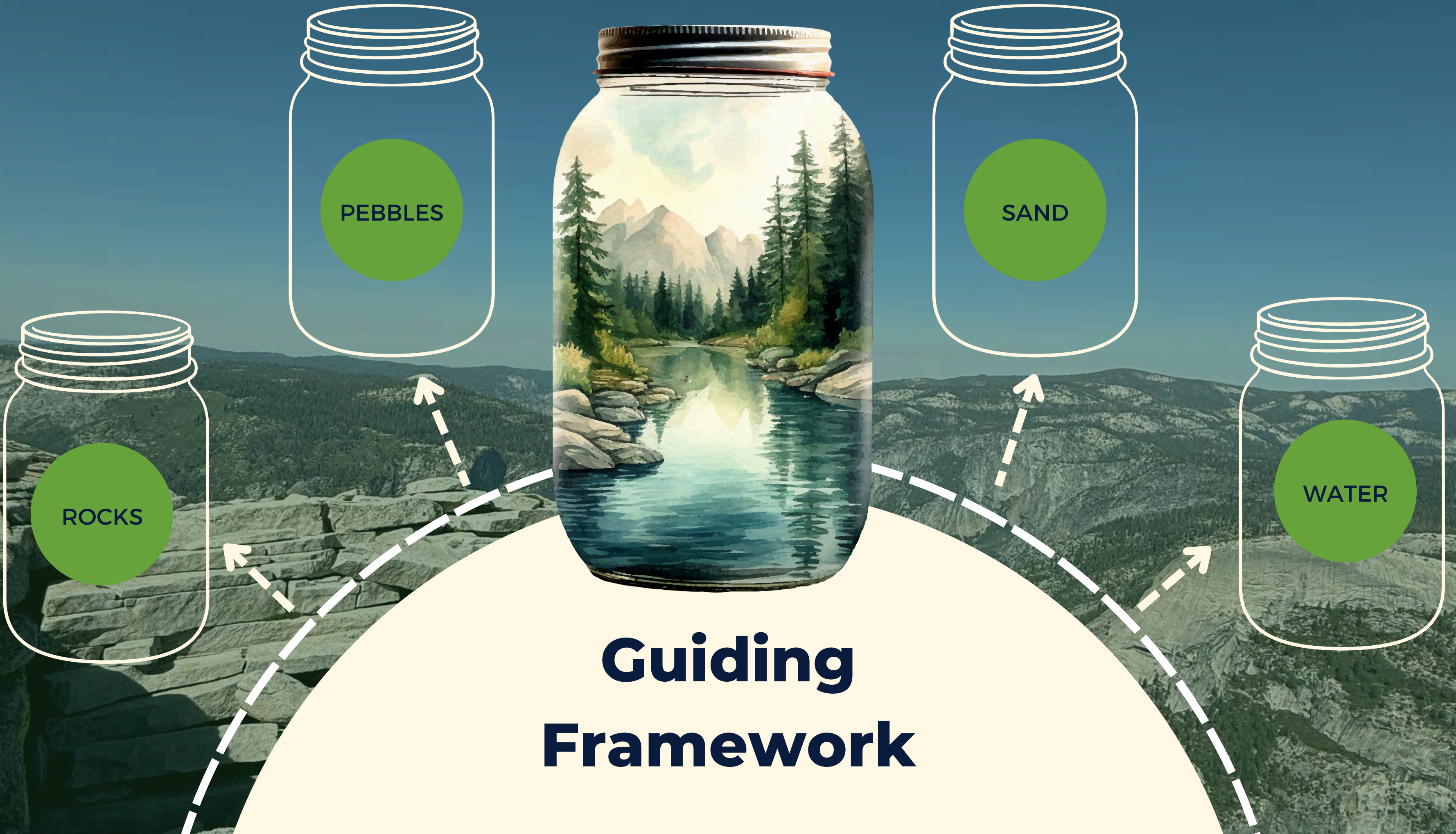




# Top 10 Initiatives from the 3-Year IMPACT PLAN







# Guiding Framework





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## SEARCH FOR INNOVATION

National Gold Medal Awards Program & Commission for Accreditation on Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA)



## SUPPORT & SOCIALIZE RESEARCH

Research for the Profession, Journal of Park and Recreation Administration (JPRA) & Best Paper



## OUR BIG ROCKS



## PREPARE FUTURE LEADERS

Externships, Mentorship, Career Development & Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI), Legends in Parks and Recreation



## ACKNOWLEDGE STEWARDS & DOERS

Honorable Cornelius Amory Pugsley Medal & Robert W. Crawford Hall of Fame





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## Search for Innovation

- **National Gold Medal Award Program** - Honors public park and recreation agencies throughout the United States and armed forces recreation programs worldwide that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource management and innovative approaches to delivering superb parks and recreation services. AAPRA is governing organization and administrator.
- **CAPRA - Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies** - In partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, CAPRA is the only national accreditation program and is a valuable measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management and service to the community. AAPRA appoints (5) five representatives to the Commission.







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## Preparing Future Leaders

- **Extern Program** - Focus on mentoring young professionals, paired at NRPA conference and receive financial support for their attendance. AAPRA members serve as Mentors.
- **Mentoring Program** - Pairs seasoned professionals with young professionals, students and new directors to provide development opportunities from April through November.
- **Career Development** - Develops resources for professionals who are being promoted to supervisory positions and professionals in supervisory positions who are advancing to organizational leadership.







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## Preparing Future Leaders

- **JEDI** - Dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment for all AAPRA Fellows through programs, initiatives that combat systemic and structural racism, and promotes a culture of equity for all, through knowledge advancement, research, education and scholarly efforts.
- **Legends of Parks and Recreation** - Video recordings of leaders in parks and recreation, recordings posted on AAPRA website, AAPRA membership NOT required to nominate or be nominated.







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## Support & Socialize Research

- **Research** - Conducts surveys based on identified needs of practitioners. Utilizes researchers who have expertise in those areas.
- **JPRA** - AAPRA owns the Journal of Park and Recreation Administration. Members receive electronic access.
- **Best Paper** - Recognizes Masters Thesis/Special Project or Dissertation which are alternated annually. AAPRA provides cash prize to author.





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## Stewards & Doers

- **Honorable Cornelius Amory Pugsley Medal** - Honors individuals for lifetime achievements in parks and conservation, AAPRA membership NOT required to nominate or be nominated
- **Robert W. Crawford Hall of Fame** - Partnership with National Recreation and Park Association, selects individuals who have made outstanding and lasting contributions to the advancement of recreation and parks. AAPRA appoints (4) four representatives who assist this joint committee.







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## Operational Committees

- **Board of Directors** - Elected by the AAPRA membership, provides governance, oversight and fiscal stewardship of the AAPRA. President, President-Elect, Past President, Treasurer, Secretary and (6) six at-large Directors.
- **Branding & Social Media** - Ensures consistent use of AAPRA branding, develops and oversees strategies for AAPRA's presence on social media platforms, helps generate and curate engaging mission-driven content, strengthens connections with current and potential members and encourages interaction and participation through social media channels (i.e., LinkedIn).
- **Bylaws** - Reviews and maintains governing documents, recommends amendments, ensure compliance, supports organizational effectiveness.







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## Operational Committees

- **Leadership Team** - Shares updates, challenges, and needs of their committee, ensures committees work aligns with AAPRA's overall mission and strategy and annual priorities, contributes to discussions that require insights and collaboration across committees. Consists of Co-Chairs of each Committee/Task Force.
- **Membership** - Stewards the AAPRA's membership base including recruitment, selection, engagement and retention. Comprised of President and (6) appointive members with no less than 3 years of AAPRA membership.
- **Nominating** - Identifies and recruits leadership, ensures diversity and balance, vets and recommends candidates and ensures dual slate. Chaired by Past-President with (5) five members, a majority of whom are Past Presidents.





# AAPRA PARTNERS - THANK YOU

OPEN	AAPRA E-NEWSLETTER
MUSCO LIGHTING	NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD PROGRAM
DAVEY TREE EXPERT COMPANY NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION	HONORABLE CORNELIUS AMORY PUGSLEY MEDAL
USTA	CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER-MASTER CLASS SERIES
NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION	NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD PROGRAM, COMMISSION FOR ACCREDITATION OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES, ROBERT W. CRAWFORD HALL OF FAME, CAREER DEVELOPMENT VIDEO & TOOLKIT
OPEN	EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM
LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES, INC	LEGENDS OF PARKS & RECREATION, ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER
SAGAMORE-VENTURE PUBLISHING	JOURNAL OF PARK AND RECREATION
PENNSYLVANIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY	CAREER DEVELOPMENT VIDEO & TOOLKIT



**Separate 501(c)(3) with its own Board of Directors.**

**Provides scholarships to NRPA schools.**

**All members are respectfully asked to make an annual donation to APRF. While the specific amount is not of primary importance, achieving 100% participation reflects our commitment and collective responsibility.**

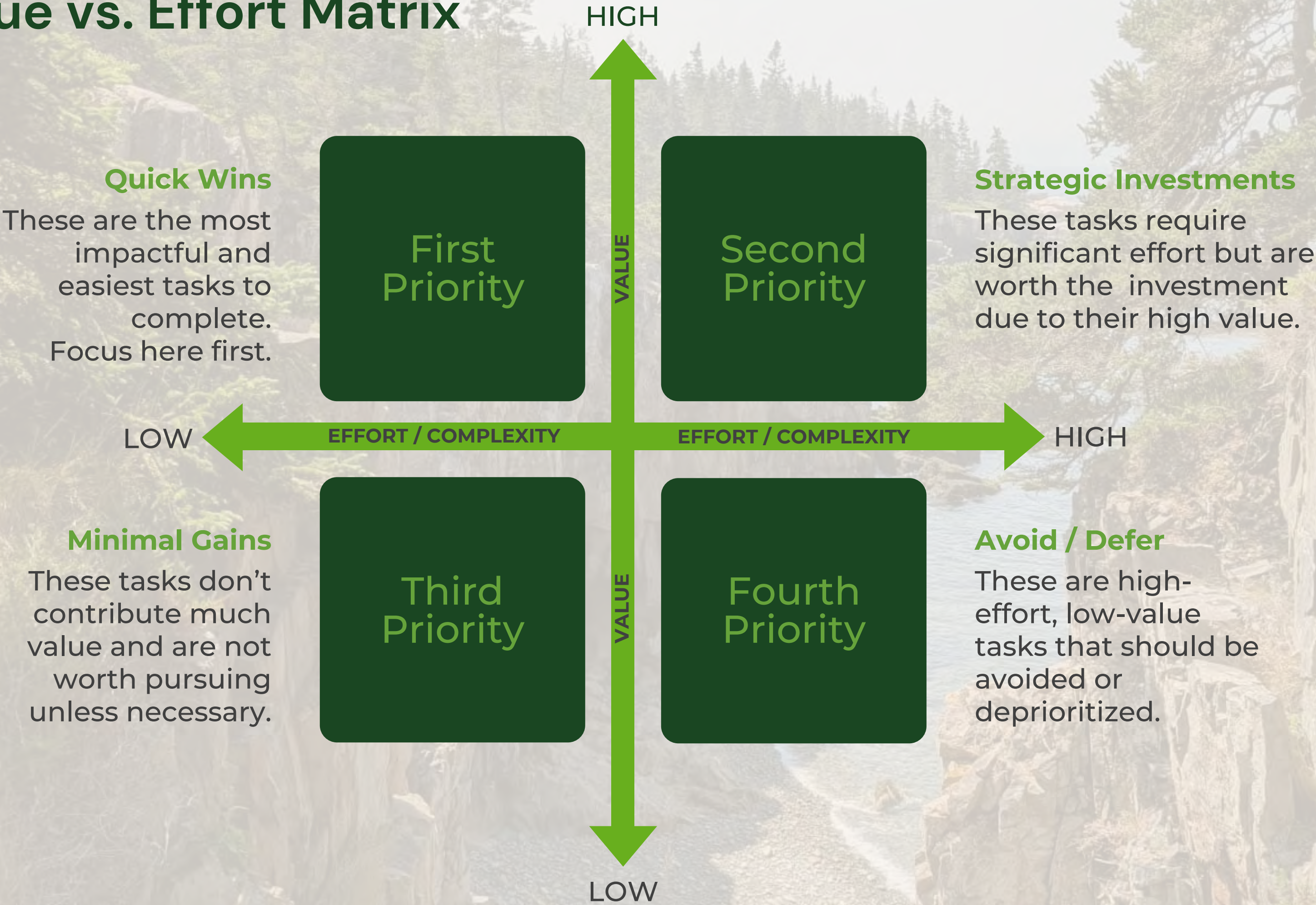


**American  
Parks & Recreation  
Foundation**

RESEARCH • INNOVATION • GROWTH



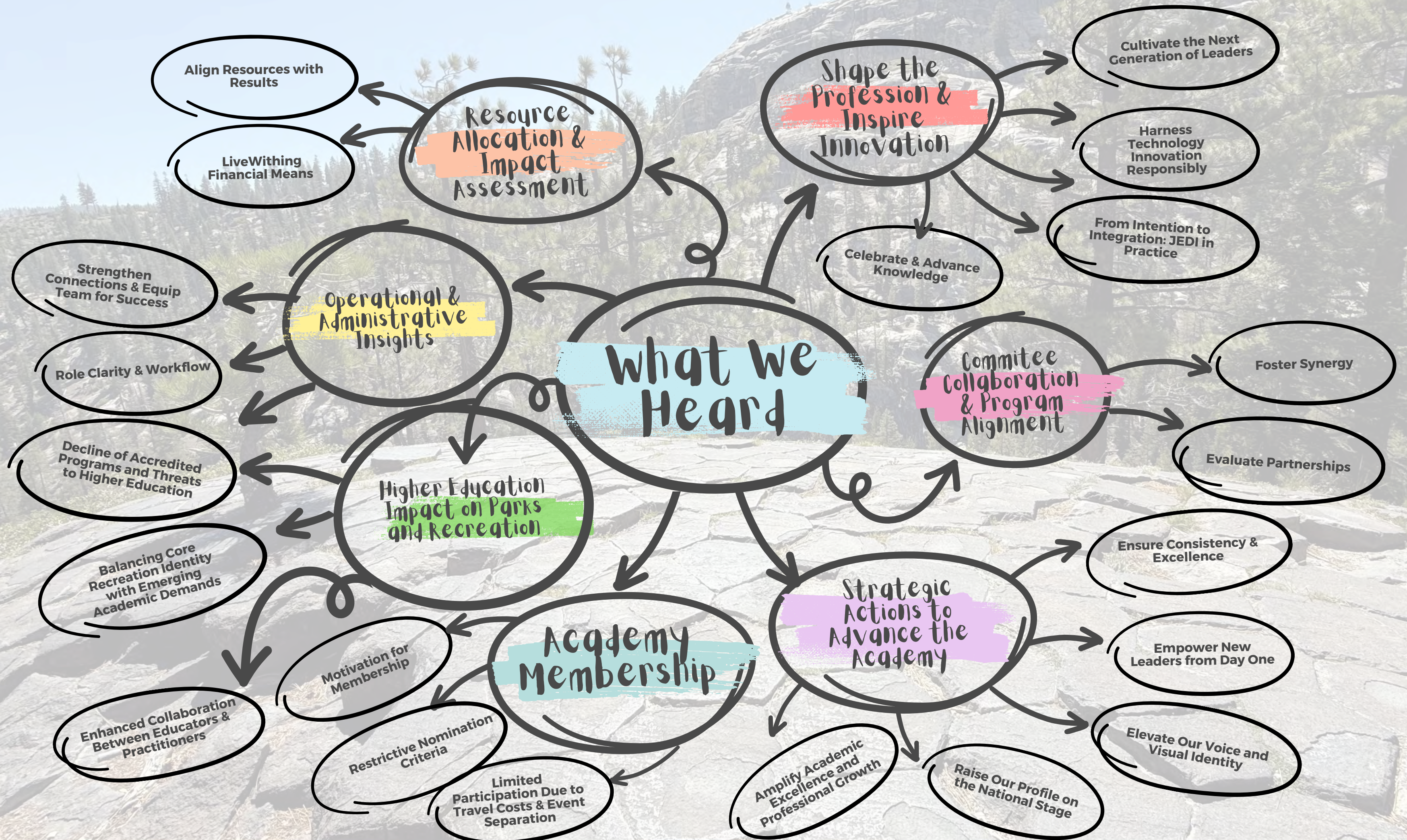
# Value vs. Effort Matrix



PRIORITIZATION MATRIX  
REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES









SHAPE THE PROFESSION &  
INSPIRE INNOVATION

**INNOVATION**

RIGHT SIZE THE ORGANIZATION  
FOR IMPACT

**MEMBERSHIP**

RESOURCE ALIGNMENT &  
EXPLORE NEW REVENUE

**RESOURCES**

# KEY FINDINGS



ELEVATE OUR PRESENCE

**PROMOTION**

OPERATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE  
INSIGHTS

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION  
REINFORCE VISION & MISSION**

These efforts are not a departure from what makes the Academy special—they are a bold recommitment to what makes it matter. We exist to **INSPIRE**, **INFLUENCE** and **ADVANCE** the field of parks, recreation and conservation. As a body of distinguished professionals and educators, we are dedicated to research, mentorship and the elevation of best practices that shape the future of our field.





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# APEX ASCENT : 2026 - 2028

## GOALS

SEARCH FOR  
INNOVATION

PREPARE FUTURE  
LEADERS

SUPPORT &  
SOCIALIZE RESEARCH

ACKNOWLEDGE  
STEWARDS & DOERS

## SUMMIT ANCHORS (OBJECTIVES)

INNOVATION:  
SHAPE THE PROFESSION

MEMBERSHIP:  
RIGHT SIZE THE ORGANIZATION

RESOURCES:  
ALIGN RESOURCES WITH  
RESULTS & EXPLORE NEW  
REVENUE SOURCES

PROMOTION  
ELEVATE OUR PRESENCE

INFRASTRUCTURE:  
OPERATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE  
INSIGHTS



INNOVATION:  
SHAPE THE PROFESSION &  
INSPIRE INNOVATION



MEMBERSHIP:  
RIGHT SIZE THE  
ORGANIZATION FOR IMPACT



RESOURCES:  
RESOURCE ALIGNMENT &  
EXPLORE NEW REVENUE SOURCES



PROMOTION:  
ELEVATE OUR PRESENCE



INFRASTRUCTURE:  
OPERATIONS &  
ADMINISTRATIVE INSIGHTS

## MISSION

An Academy of distinguished park and recreation administrators, scholars committed to research, professional development and the use of best practices.

## VISION

To **INSPIRE**, **INFLUENCE** and **ADVANCE** the Park and Recreation Profession.





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# APEX ASCENT : 2026 - 2028

## OBJECTIVES

### 1.0 INNOVATION: SHAPE THE PROFESSION

## CLIMBING HOLDS (KEY INITIATIVES)

- 1.1 - Analyze trends and best practices from the National Gold Medal and CAPRA to inform strategic priorities, raise standards and inspire innovation.
- 1.2 - Transition Career Development Task Force into Career Development Committee.
- 1.3 - Convene an annual Think Tank to address key issues or trends in parks and recreation and produce a white paper to inform policy, practice and curriculum.
- 1.4 - Expand professional dialogue by offering more webinars and structured conversations between practitioners and educators.
- 1.5 - Examine decline in higher education programs (accredited and non-accredited) and assess impact on profession's pipeline, research and leadership development.

## SUMMIT (IMPACT)

Members gain access to forward-thinking research, trends and best practices. Increased collaboration between practitioners and practitioners fosters innovation. Members see the Academy as a thought leader and convener of critical professional conversations. Expanded professional networks and deeper cross-sector relationships. Opportunities for members to contribute to nationally recognized white papers and influence policy.





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# APEX ASCENT : 2026 - 2028

## OBJECTIVES

### 2.0 MEMBERSHIP: RIGHT SIZE THE ORGANIZATION

## CLIMBING HOLDS (KEY INITIATIVES)

- 2.1 - Expand Membership Committee to become the Membership & Development Committee.
- 2.2 - Expand Membership Category to include Advocate Membership.
- 2.3 - Create and implement strategic, targeted membership campaign to fill vacancies.
- 2.4 - Implement timely, personalized follow-up for membership renewals to address attrition.
- 2.5 - Renew and refine Educator Membership eligibility requirements.
- 2.6 - Create messaging prospectus for Emeritus Membership to honor service and encourage ongoing contributions.
- 2.7 - Determine optimal membership numbers for max. organizational impact.
- 2.8 - Establish Associate Membership Category for Externs.
- 2.9 - Adjust Practitioner and Educator Nominations to allow for self-nomination.

## SUMMIT (IMPACT)

Prospective members feel welcomed, informed and valued during recruitment. Clear accessible nomination process that supports inclusivity and diversity. Members experience ongoing engagement and recognition throughout their tenure. Emeritus members feel honored while remaining connected to mission. Members understand role and potential contributions to the Academy's initiatives.





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# APEX ASCENT : 2026 - 2028

## OBJECTIVES

**3.0  
RESOURCES:  
ALIGN RESOURCES  
WITH RESULTS AND  
EXPLORE NEW  
REVENUE SOURCES**

## CLIMBING HOLDS (KEY INITIATIVES)

- 3.1 - Explore investment strategies for excess reserve funds to strengthen long-term sustainability.
- 3.2 - Shift organizational culture from primarily advisory to hands-on action oriented engagement.
- 3.3 - Identify and pursue funding diversification strategies including partnerships, sponsorships and earned income.
- 3.4 - Identify and prioritize areas requiring administrative support.
- 3.5 - Develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for programs, membership and financial health.
- 3.6 - Maintain current membership dues for two-years in response to member feedback and economic conditions.

## SUMMIT (IMPACT)

Members feel their involvement has tangible outcomes with visible impact. Programs and services are delivered efficiently with appropriate administrative backing. Members perceive value in dues relative to benefits and opportunities provides. Academy operations financially stable, transparent and sustainable. Strategic partnerships and sponsorships enhance program reach and resources.





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# APEX ASCENT : 2026 - 2028

## OBJECTIVES

### 4.0 PROMOTION: ELEVATE OUR PRESENCE

## CLIMBING HOLDS (KEY INITIATIVES)

- 4.1 - Transition Branding & Social Media Task Force to Standing Committee with a formal change and annual objectives for sustained oversight.
- 4.2 - Implement structured social media strategy that includes content planning, scheduling and consistent posting on LinkedIn.
- 4.3 - Provide committee oversight to ensure messaging is aligned with Academy values and strategic goals.
- 4.4 - Modify Management Services Agreement to include services for posting on Social Media.

## SUMMIT (IMPACT)

Consistent, professional and engaging presence online. Improved awareness of Academy activities, achievements and opportunities for involvement. Stronger brand recognition within parks and recreation profession. Members feel pride of being part of a highly visible and respected organization.





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# APEX ASCENT : 2026 - 2028

## OBJECTIVES

### 5.0 INFRASTRUCTURE: ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INSIGHTS

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 5.1 - Identify key leadership and administrative roles with associated responsibilities.
- 5.2 - Establish emergency backup protocols for unexpected absences or transitions.
- 5.3 - Maintain a living succession planning document and transition protocols.
- 5.4 - Maximize the use of existing and new tools for efficiency and ensure all members receive adequate training.
- 5.5 - Assess current administrative support structures for alignment with mission and financial stewardship.
- 5.6 - Develop position profiles and knowledge transfer plans, including decision making authority and system access.
- 5.7 - Document key workflows and create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Committees, Officers/Board Members, Executive Director and Red Barn.
- 5.8 - Make SOPs easily accessible to Fellows/Members.
- 5.9 - Create a succession timeline and readiness plan.

## SUMMIT (IMPACT)

Members and Leaders clearly understand their roles, responsibilities and operational workflows. Consistent and smooth organizational functioning regardless of leadership transitions. Increased efficiency and confidence in using organizational tools and platforms. Seamless onboarding of new members, leadership, board members, officers and staff. Strong sense of preparedness and resilience within the Academy.





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for Park and Recreation Administration**

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## **Next Steps - Critical Path**

- **Membership**
  - **Full Membership - Recruitment**
  - **New Category: Advocate Members (Bylaws Vote)**







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## **Next Steps - Critical Path**

- **Engagement**
  - **Increased Confidence and Use of Technology and Talent**
  - **Superpowers**
  - **Committee Assignments**
  - **Advocacy - NRPA Action Alerts**







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## ONLINE TOOLS FOR MEMBERS



- **Wild Apricot** - Online member directory.
- **Basecamp** - Online project management: platform for communication, scheduling meetings, tracking work streams, document storage.
- **Website** - Digital hub for informing, e-commerce, and promoting online presence.
- **LinkedIn** - Professional networking platform for career development, job searching and professional networking.
- **Submittable** - Online Platform to collect, review and manage applications.
- **Zoom/Teams** - Online Platform for virtual meetings.
- **Social Media Tool Kit** - Resources to amplify the AAPRA and APRF presence.





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## Wild Apricot for members

Personify, Inc.

Designed for iPhone

★★★★★ 4.8 + 10.9K Ratings

Free

Establish login at <https://aapra.wildapricot.org/Sys/Reset/PasswordRequest>

Search for "Wild Apricot for Members" in the App Store

Download the app and log in with your login information



## Basecamp - Project Management

Project & Team Communication

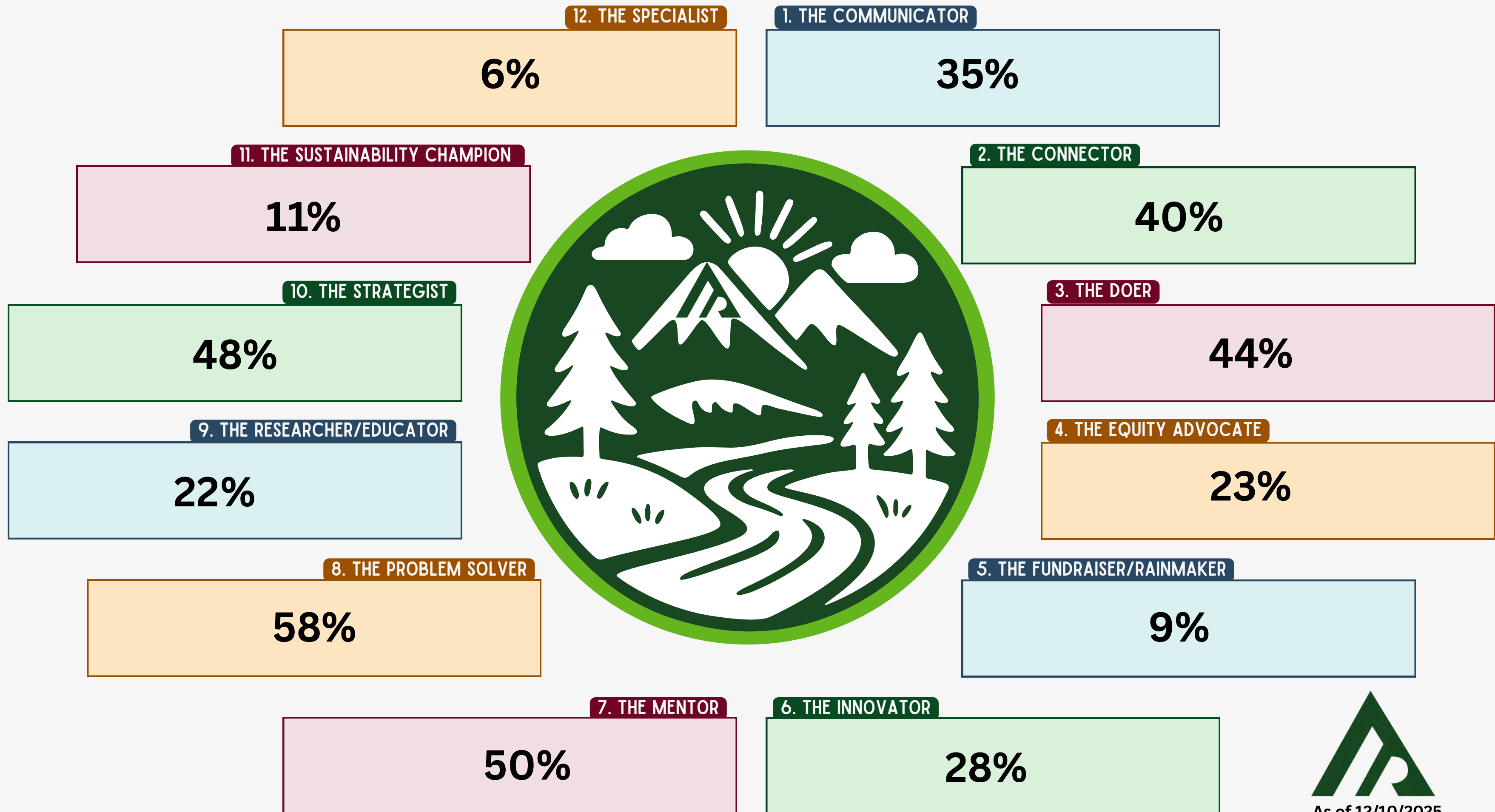


Establish login at <https://basecamp.com>

Search for "Basecamp" in the App Store

Download the app and log in with your login information





As of 12/10/2025

88 Individuals Responding



### Become a Park Advocate Today!

Be the first to know about critical legislation impacting park and recreation. From your local park to Washington D.C., make your voice heard today!

Fields with an asterisk (\*) are required.

First Name \*

Last Name \*

Personal Email \*

Cell Phone \*

- ☐ By checking this box, you agree to receive important updates and account notifications via SMS from **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)**. You will receive no more than 5 msgs/month. Message and data rates may apply. Consent is not a condition of purchase. Text **STOP** to opt out, **HELP** for help. Read our [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

Address \*

Thank you for standing up and supporting park and recreation.

Join the parks and recreation movement today!



NATIONAL RECREATION  
AND PARK ASSOCIATION





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## **Next Steps - Critical Path**

- **Succession Planning - Built to Last**
  - **Development of SOPs**
  - **Identification of Sponsors/Partners**
  - **RFP - Association Management Services**







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## 2026 Academy Ascents

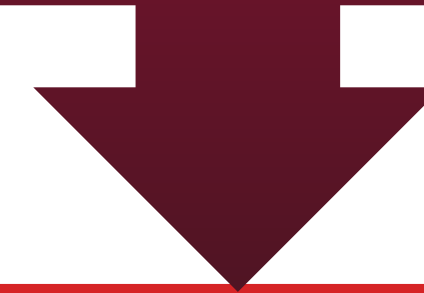
- Cross Pollination Rock Alignment
  - Branding & Social Media Committee
  - Career Development Committee
  - Executive Committee
  - Investment Task Force
  - Industry Council Task Force
  - NRPA Coordination Group
- Conversations That Matter
- Gold Medal
- Technology & Tools
- Feedback - Annual Meeting & Awards Dinner





# What Are the Conversations That Matter: Master Classes?

**Conversations That Matter: Master Classes (CTM: Master Classes)** deliver timely, thought-provoking, and practice-shifting dialogue for park and recreation leaders.



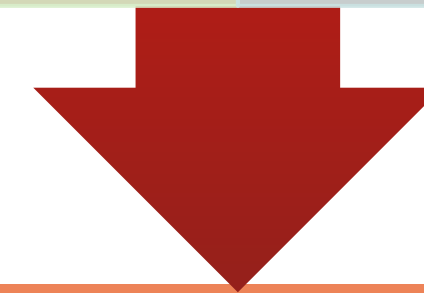
These sessions are designed to:

Inspire innovative  
solutions

Challenge assumptions  
and spark new thinking

Foster meaningful  
professional connections

Provide actionable  
strategies to elevate  
impact in communities



Participants walk away with tools, clarity, and confidence to influence change within their agencies.



# Guiding Principles & Core Features

## Guiding Principles

- Position the Academy as a *thought leader* by elevating bold, challenging, and relevant conversations.
- Present topics of substantial importance to advancing the parks and recreation profession.
- Proactively solicit issues from members, practitioners, and industry leaders.
- Create space for *facilitated dialogue* through breakout groups.

## Course Features

- Expert-led sessions featuring seasoned leaders
- Practical frameworks and real-world examples
- Facilitated dialogue and peer-to-peer breakout discussions
- Action-planning to connect insights to organizational practice
- Resources and templates for continued learning and application



# Our Partners

---





# 2026 CTM: Master Classes – Calendar

Adapting Language,  
Preserving Values  
(JEDI Committee)



January

Environmental Resilience  
(Research to Practice  
Committee)



April

(USTA/NRPA)



July

From Evidence to Impact:  
Advancing Health and  
Well-Being with  
Recreation and Sport  
(Research to Practice  
Committee)



February

(USTA)



May

Equity in Practice  
(Research to Practice  
Committee)



September





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## Next Steps - Critical Path

- Gold Medal Ambassadors
- Medal Mining - The Gold Medal Nuggets



**GOOD PEOPLE DOING EXTRAORDINARY WORK.**  
It's Time To Go For Your National Gold Medal Award

**2026 CALL FOR ENTRIES**

**OPEN TO:**  
Public Park and Recreation Agencies  
and Armed Forces Recreation Programs

**APPLY:**  
November 4, 2025 - March 13, 2026

**GOVERNED BY:**  
American Academy  
for Park and Recreation  
Administration

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:**

**NRPA**  
NATIONAL  
RECREATION AND PARK  
ASSOCIATION

**MUSCO**  
Lighting  
We Make It Happen.

**2026**

**NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD**  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE FIELD OF  
PARK AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT

**For more information and to apply**  
<https://aapra.org/National-Gold-Medal-Award>

**Benefits:**


- National recognition for your agency
- Increase confidence in your agency's capacity
- Boost agency's reputation & credibility
- Add to your agency's legacy



AAPRA

AAPRA All Members

ABACAHAPAARAAABES




BHBMBS



BW



CCCP



CD

Message Board

All Academy Meeting - Registration Required...28

Basecamp Training8  
I just attended the first Basecamp Boot...

Happy Thanksgiving14  
Giving Thanks to Our Talented & Dedicate...

Share Your Thoughts: AAPRA's Annual Membership Meeting & Awards Dinner...

Chat

Hi Elizabeth, I am not available to join next wee...

Elizabeth S. Kessler 5:14pm  
Thanks Jayne. Appreciate you sending a chat ...

Elizabeth S. Kessler 5:15pm  
Bill Thank you. We will be thinking abou...

Elizabeth S. Kessler 6:08pm  
Syd understand you are another candidate...

DK Donna Kuethe 7:53pm  
Hi Elizabeth -

Docs & Files

Basecamp Boot Camp

All-Member Meeting Agendas

Resources

Apex Ascent

Schedule

WED, DEC 10  
All-Member Academy Meeting - Apex Ascent: Mapping the Route  
1:00pm - 3:00pm

THU, DEC 11  
AAPRA Basecamp Boot Camp  
11:00am - 12:00pm

MON, DEC 15  
AAPRA Basecamp Boot Camp

To-dos



Organize work across teams. Assign tasks, set due dates, and discuss.

Make a to-do list

Project Activity

YESTERDAY

AAPRA All Members

Steve W. commented on [All Academy Meeting - Registration Required](#)7:43am





Home

Lineup

Pings5

Hey!112

Activity

My Stuff

Find

redbarn

COMMUNICATIONS

View all projects in a list · Press ⌘J anytime to jump

AAPRA

AAPRA Board

AAPRA Board of Directors

AAPRA

AAPRA Executive Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Leadership Team  
(Committee/Task Force...)

AAPRA

AAPRA All Members

AAPRA

AAPRA Pugsley Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Investment  
Task Force

AAPRA

AAPRA NRPA Coordination

RECENT PROJECTS

AAPRA

AAPRA Best Paper

AAPRA

AAPRA Branding and Social  
Media Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Bylaws Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Career Development  
Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Conversations  
That Matter

AAPRA

AAPRA Extern Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Foundation  
Task Force

AAPRA

AAPRA JEDI Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Legends Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Membership  
Development Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA Mentoring  
Committee

AAPRA

AAPRA National Gold Medal  
Award Committee

A yellow square icon with rounded corners, featuring a stylized black letter 'A' or a similar abstract shape in the center.



# BASECAMP BOOT CAMP

American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration





# PROJECT STRUCTURE



- **Project Boards**
  - **Organize**  
**Committees/Task Forces**
- **Tools**
  - **Message Board**
  - **Campfire/Chat**
  - **To dos**
  - **Schedule**
  - **Docs & Files**







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Your Feedback

**Urgently  
Needed**

**ANNUAL  
MEETING**

**AWARDS  
DINNER**

**OTHER  
IDEAS**





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## GET INVOLVED



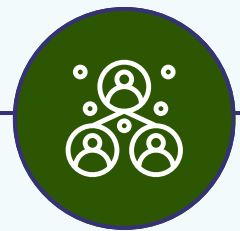




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## Upcoming AAPRA Activities– See You on the Trail!



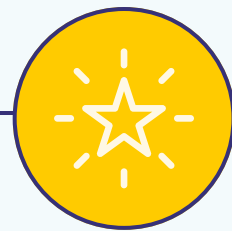
**Extern  
Reception**

**Monday,  
September 28th**



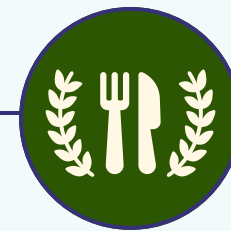
**General  
Membership  
Meeting**

**TBD  
Virtual or In-  
Person TBD**



**Presentation  
of National  
Gold Medal  
Grand  
Plaques**

**Wednesday,  
September 30th  
General Session**



**Annual  
Awards  
Reception &  
Dinner**

**TBD**

**Registration  
Required**



**Connect with  
Co-Horts**

**Inspire  
Influence  
Advance**







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**THANK YOU!**

*“You cannot get through a single day without  
having an impact on the world around you.  
What you do makes a difference.”*

*~ Dr. Jane Goodall*