



AEE Accreditation Site Visits: Information for Programs seeking Initial or Continuing Accreditation

Scheduling: once your self-assessment has been submitted to AEE and approved by a liaison from the accreditation council, select dates for the site visit and coordinate logistics with the AEE Director of Standards Development and Accreditation. Dates should be selected no sooner than 6-8 weeks after submission of your self-assessment. The site visit dates must be scheduled when you have *programming in the field* so that the review team can observe field operations and talk to staff. You must select dates when you have at least one of your technical activities available for observation (i.e., climbing, biking, water activity, backpacking, etc.). Dates can be scheduled during the week and over the weekend as necessary. The program is responsible for putting together a tentative schedule before the site visit dates are finalized. The lead reviewer reviews and approves this schedule, and then travel arrangements for the review team can be made. On-site interviews are typically conducted with a program director or coordinator, program management, field staff or faculty, and administrators (HR, marketing, admissions, Head of School, etc.). Some interviews (such as with a member of the Board of Directors, etc.) can be scheduled via phone.

Review Team Composition: AEE staff reviews with individuals who have the requisite experience to interpret the standards that are applicable to the organization being reviewed. Most reviews are staffed with either two or three reviewers. The number of reviewers assigned depends on whether the review is for an initial accreditation or a re-accreditation, as well as the size and complexity of the organization. The review team will have read your self-assessment before arriving. Reviewers do not receive compensation for their time on reviews, but their expenses are reimbursed by the program seeking accreditation.

Length of Site Visit: most site visits are 2.5 days long, with a “pre-day” evening dinner meeting with the review team or lead reviewer to go over the schedule, get to know each other, etc. Depending on the program's size and scope, some reviews may have an extra day. A typical schedule often looks something like this:

Monday: evening dinner meeting from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Tuesday: 8:00 am- 5:00 pm - full review day: interview staff and administrators, observe

activities, etc.

Wednesday: 8:00am – 5:00 pm – full review day: interview staff, inspect files, vehicles, equipment, and observe activities.

Thursday: 8:00am -12:00pm - final prep by review team and exit interview with program staff. The exit interview typically last 1 – 1.5 hours. The review team will share their initial findings during the exit interview and talk about the “next steps” in the accreditation process.

Lodging, Food, and Transportation: the review team will need accommodation for the length of the review. Lodging can be on-site (if available and appropriate), or at a budget hotel nearby. Most reviews require a minimum of three nights of lodging. Reviewers share a room if the same gender to reduce the cost. Mixed-gender or teams of three will require two rooms. The program can arrange the lodging or ask the lead reviewer to do this. Reviewers can eat some meals on-site (if available) and/or at restaurants nearby. Most reviews require a rental car for the review team to get to and from the airport and to travel to programming sites.

Work Space: the review team will require a dedicated on-site private work space to set-up their laptops, review paperwork, and meet throughout the day. A conference room or unused office space will typically suffice.

Expenses: the program seeking accreditation is responsible for reimbursement of all reviewer expenses including transportation (airfare or mileage), rental car, food, and lodging. It is hard to estimate total expenses as travel costs continue to rise perceptively in the post-Covid Pandemic period, so the following information is a rough estimate. *Total expenses could range from \$1000 on the low end (rare) to more than \$3,500 on the high end. International Site Visits can be twice as expensive.* AEE tries to reduce costs by finding reviewers from your region who can drive to your site. However, this is not always possible, so reviewers need to fly to the nearest airport and rent a car. Reviewers pay for most of their expenses up-front and then submit expense reimbursement forms to AEE with all receipts after the review. AEE reimburses reviewers. After the review, AEE then submits an itemized invoice of reviewer expenses to the program with 30-day net terms.

Important Note About Expenses: If the hosting organization cancels the site visit after the dates are picked, they are responsible for any travel costs that cannot be refunded to our volunteer reviewers.

Questions? Please contact Steve Pace, Director of Standards Development and Accreditation at steve@ae.org or 303-440-8844 x2.