



Community Paddlesports Leader (CPL) Leader Criteria

Community Paddlesports Leader (CPL) Course Overview

Candidates will explore and develop solutions to “big picture” paddling challenges including venue selection, group management, participant competency, and rescue techniques across a variety of paddlecraft. This award is intended for short paddling outings* and is not a trip leader award. The content included here is criteria for evaluation and leader certification, not guidance on how to deliver the course. The content delivery structure and methodology will be at the discretion of the provider; selected methods shall be in alignment with current SEIC policies and best practices. This is a 4-year, non-renewable certification.

Course Objective

To train leaders that engage with the broader paddling community to provide safe, fun, and memorable paddling experiences at the entry level, that are not craft specific. These outings* will occur in a protected, mild water environment with minimal power boat traffic. Targeted applications include but are not limited to community outreach programs, local clubs, parks, scouting programs, etc.

For the purposes of this curriculum, **outings are defined as paddling experiences of not more than 4 hours, within a defined space where the start and finish are the same place, and emergency services are readily available.*

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC).
- Be a current ACA Member

- Hold a current ACA Level 1 Skills Assessment and Paddlesport Safety Facilitator (PSF) certification in chosen craft of canoe, kayak, or SUP. To lead mixed craft experiences, PSF certification is required for each additional craft.

Course Duration

Minimum of 2 days (16 hours). Eight hours may be conducted virtually at the discretion of the provider.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Protected water with constant access to safe landing, within .25 nm from shore, and minimal power boat traffic. Successful Leader candidates will demonstrate the ability to competently perform at the top of this range:

- Winds less than 10 knots
- Waves less than 1 foot
- Current less than 1 knot

Course Size

5 Candidates : 1 Evaluator; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of candidates permitted is 10.

Evaluator

All three of the following requirements are needed to provide this course:

- ACA Level 2 (or higher) Instructor Trainer OR Level 2 (or higher) Instructor with the Community Paddlesport Leader (CPL) certification
- Credentials to deliver the PSF in at least 2 of 3 disciplines
- Familiarity with the content and mechanics of the Paddlesport Safety Facilitator award prior to offering the CPL certification course

Succeeding Courses

Kayak, Canoe, or SUP Trip Leader Assessment Course

Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking, Canoeing, or SUP Instructor Certification Course

The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate Community Paddlesports Leader (CPL) Candidates. The content and sequence of evaluation is to be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and be craft appropriate.

General Requirements for all ACA Community Paddlesport Leader (CPL) Certification Candidates

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives
- Be a full ACA member
- Successfully complete a Community Paddlesport Leader certification course
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Maintain ACA membership annually

Course Outline

Introduction, Logistics, and Expectations:

- Welcome! We're so glad that you've chosen to further your paddling experience and education by attending this course! Let's review a few highlights about the ACA
- Let's talk about the course itinerary, expectations, and limitations
 - This certification is not a certified instructor award, and thus does not grant eligibility for ACA's instructor insurance program
- Lay of the land (and water): the logistics of this venue
- Explain the process of evaluation

- Review liability waiver (if applicable), assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure

ACA Community Paddlesport Leader (CPL) Requirements

Demonstrate a knowledge of the ACA:

- Education, Competition, Recreation, Stewardship & Policy, and overarching DEI programs
- Benefits of ACA membership, including community connections, educational resources, insurance programs, public policy representation, and more

Possess the following leadership skills:

- Positive interpersonal skills
- Ability to calmly strategize and problem solve under pressure
- Ability to collaborate with others and recognize available resources
- Ability to seek advice, set boundaries, and learn from mistakes
- Situational awareness to include time management
- Meeting and accepting people where they are, not where you want them to be
- Effective communication pre-outing, during outing, post-outing
- Modeling joy and appreciation for the paddling community as a whole

Demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to perform the following skills:

- Pre-outing
 - Venue selection with alternatives (accessible, parking, restrooms, access to emergency services, cell phone coverage, use permits, etc.)
 - Pre-outing participant communication with outing description, expectations, gear lists, back up plans, alternate routes, etc.
 - Use of thorough float plan(s)

- Appropriate marketing and outreach
- During outing
 - Venue viability assessment prior to group's arrival to include: weather, wind, water, other waterway users, potential challenges or hazards
 - Navigation – basics of maps and charts; knowing where you are and where you are headed
 - Create a welcoming environment for every participant
 - Assess gear choices and paddler preferences for craft compatibility
 - Determine participant goals, capabilities, and in-water comfort prior to launch
 - Discuss the concept of “challenge by choice”
 - Self care and care of other group members
 - Importance of fueling, hydration, clothing/insulation, and sun protection
 - Cold shock, hypothermia, and hyperthermia: prevention and treatment
 - Assess the **group's** ability to respond to unexpected situations and rescues and make adjustments accordingly
 - Know when to go and when to say no
 - Engage participants in these decisions
 - Group management (structured or unstructured) and group connectivity methods
 - Establish on-water communication methods that the group understands and accepts
 - Create games, challenges, or activities to maintain connectivity and fun
 - Continually re-evaluate venue, paddler comfort, and group participation
- Post-outing
 - Participant feedback and recap
 - Post outing reflections and “lessons learned”

Safety and Rescue:

- Boat handling to effectively complete rescues and manage group connectivity
- Assisted rescue solutions with mixed craft
- Successfully self-rescue in craft of choice
- Direct others in completing assisted rescues
- Contact towing strategies with mixed craft
- Effectively communicate with others outside of your group
- Incident management strategies

Demonstrate an understanding of:

- Paddler etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and application to paddling environments
- First aid and CPR training is a very valuable tool and could make the difference between a “near miss” and an emergency requiring outside rescue / first responders
- Industry best practices pertaining to liability insurance (or other coverages) as part of a holistic risk management plan
- Weather apps that include radar and lightning data
- Importance of continuing education: there is always more to learn, and the skills and concepts we discussed will continue to grow with practice and experience

Smile, breathe, and have fun we are just going paddling!

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Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

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This curriculum is managed by the ACA Introduction to Paddling (IPC) Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).