

2.1: Underpinning structures

All outdoor learning practice is built upon a foundation of a shared vision and values, effective systems and an enabling culture (Figure 1). In addition, organisational values and culture contribute to the conditions that enable effective delivery and the successful achievement of outcomes, as well as providing opportunities for practitioners to reach their potential.

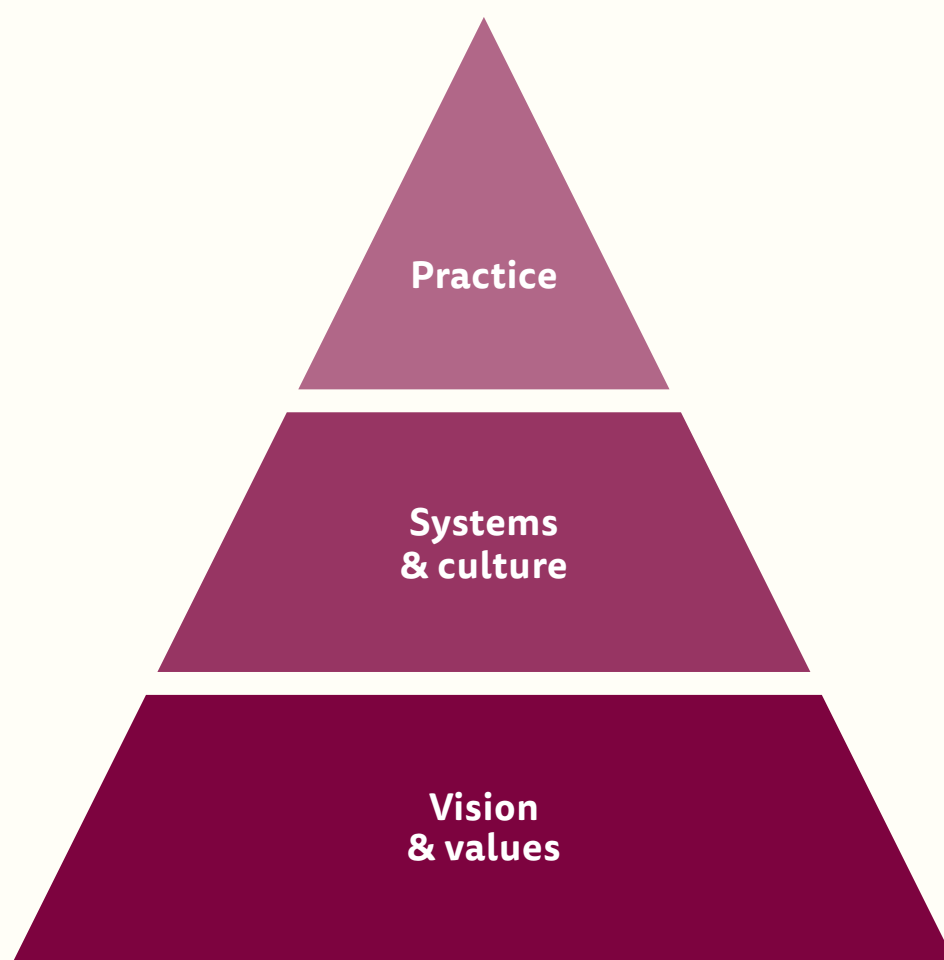


Figure 1. Outdoor learning enabling structures

Vision and values

An organisation's direction and purpose, expressed through vision and mission statements, drives its practice and provides a focus for strategic direction and decision making. Membership organisations (e.g. IOL) express their values through codes of conduct or practice and require members to adhere to them.



Where high quality outdoor learning practice is taking place, providers:

- ✓ Are clear about their organisational values and how they influence their practice.
- ✓ Are able to articulate their values through a clear vision for their provision of outdoor learning.
- ✓ Have a mission statement that sets out their purpose.
- ✓ Are committed to inclusive, sustainable practice.
- ✓ Promote the value and benefits of outdoor learning.
- ✓ Are legally compliant.
- ✓ Comply with and promote sector good practice.
- ✓ Comply with codes of practice of membership organisations that they are part of.

Organisational codes of conduct and statements of good practice provide further guidance. For example, see the IOL's **Code of Conduct, Statements of Good Practice**, Position Statements and publications relating to **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**.

Systems and culture

The systems and culture that exist within an organisation are the direct expression of their values, influencing what is delivered and how it is supported. As well as an increased likelihood of achieving desired outcomes for participants, systems (i.e. work practices) and an enabling and supportive culture create the positive conditions for staff wellbeing and development.



Where high quality outdoor learning practice is taking place, providers:

- ✓ Have clear leadership and management structures in place.
- ✓ Have a learning culture that values practitioner involvement and development, and shared learning.
- ✓ Have clear policies and operating guidelines in place.
- ✓ Understand and apply the concept of risk-benefit analysis to their risk management procedures.
- ✓ Have effective safety and safeguarding measures in place.
- ✓ Consider progression and continuity within and beyond the session or programme.
- ✓ Can describe a theory of change that links the programme activities with the intended outcomes.
- ✓ Are committed to evaluating and learning from the outcomes of programmes.
- ✓ Seek out and engage with partners to enhance their outdoor learning offer, gather external advice and support, and maintain and develop staff knowledge and skills.

Practice

Providers, whether sole traders or multi-person, have specific responsibilities for ensuring that they or their staff are appropriately equipped to deliver outdoor learning sessions in their particular context. Practitioners working for a provider also have responsibilities to themselves, the organisation and their participants, as well as for the specific teaching and learning goals.



Where high quality outdoor learning practice is taking place:

Providers are responsible for ensuring that practitioners:

- ✓ Are selected, inducted and deployed appropriately.
- ✓ Are appropriately competent and experienced for the activity.
- ✓ Understand overdue response and emergency procedures.
- ✓ Are monitored and receive feedback on their performance.
- ✓ Have safeguarding, disability and diversity awareness and first aid training.
- ✓ Are up to date – political, socio-economic trends, sector trends, current social trends e.g. AI, technology use.
- ✓ Are supported to develop professionally by:
 - » Developing technical competence.
 - » Developing subject knowledge.
 - » Developing pedagogic, andragogic and heutagogic knowledge.
 - » Understanding participants needs e.g. Special Educational Needs, EDIB.
 - » Appreciating the wider sector and associated challenges.



Where high quality outdoor learning practice is taking place:

Practitioners are responsible for:

- ✓ Upholding the values of the organisation they are working for.
- ✓ Contributing to policy development.
- ✓ Reporting safeguarding, accident and near miss incidents.
- ✓ Raising practice concerns with managers and colleagues.
- ✓ Understanding and applying necessary policies and procedures.
- ✓ Being aware of the theories that underpin their work.
- ✓ Reflect on their own practice and that of others and applying any learning.
- ✓ Maintaining competence and currency through on-going, relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

External assessment of quality

Many of the underlying structures can be assessed through existing externally accredited quality schemes that are appropriate to a particular learning setting.

Health and safety law and statutory schemes, such as the **UK's Adventure Activity Licensing Authority (AALA)** inspections of some adventurous activities for children, are supplemented by a range of externally assessed voluntary accreditations. These cover broadly similar areas of provision including health and safety policies and procedures, emergency procedures, staff competence, safeguarding, accommodation and transport (where appropriate) and data protection. Some schemes, but not all and to varying degrees, also assess teaching and learning.

In addition, National Governing Body qualifications provide external assessment of practitioner competence within specific activities, and some also offer provider approval.

Examples of UK voluntary quality approval schemes:

- » AdventureMark
- » Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC) Quality Badge
- » LOTC Mark
- » AHOEC Gold
- » Forest School Association Recognised Provider
- » Green Care Quality Mark
- » BAPA
- » British Standard BS8848
- » RYA

See also:

- 2.0 Understanding quality in outdoor learning
- 2.2 Safety management and safeguarding
- 2.3 Equity diversity inclusion and belonging
- 2.4 Developing relationships
- 2.5 Outdoor learning the environment and sustainable practice
- 2.6 Theory of change
- 2.7 Continuity and progression

