

NAF Membership Development: Stages & Services

Fact Sheet



Please explain NAF's new Membership Development plan.

NAF is introducing a new Membership Development plan, in order to provide better and more targeted services to its Academies. Under this model, each Academy will take an annual self-assessment, which will be used in conjunction with other school based data, to determine where it fits in a continuum of model development. Each level in this continuum has an accompanying set of responsibilities and services. The levels are:

- Affiliate Program
- Member Academy
- Leader Academy
- Distinguished Academy

Why is NAF making this change?

NAF's goal is to improve graduation rates and post secondary options for students through a research-based program. NAF strives to be a competitive alternative in high school reform, and fidelity to the model is necessary for NAF to be recognized by universities, businesses and foundations as a successful model for students. The new stages provide a way for us to make clear model expectations, showcase high performing academies, and develop services, tools and programs to support academies. It is in the Academies' best interest to be involved in a network that has high standards for participation and a clear path with tools, services, and programs to support academy growth.

NAF's prior service structure did not distinguish among different Academies, though in reality each Academy has specific features and levels of fidelity to the NAF model. This structure resulted in a high level of services for new Academies (the Year of Planning) but relatively limited service for the rest of the network. Under the new structure, NAF will be better able to target resources and support to Academies in good standing based on where they stand along the network continuum.

Okay, our Academy would like more such services. What do we do?

Each year, your Academy will start by taking a self-assessment. This will allow you to evaluate your Academy strengths and challenges, and to see where you stand on the network continuum. Once this is determined, and you would like to move further along the continuum, you will then apply to participate in a specific service program—Academy Redesign Cohort/ARC (moving from Member to Leader) or ASPIRE (moving from Leader to Distinguished). These service programs provide support in the key pillars of the NAF model: Curriculum & Instruction, Advisory Boards, Internships/Work Based Learning, and Academy Development. A select number of academies that remain in good standing will be chosen to participate in these programs each year.

What if my academy is not accepted into a service program?

Similar to YOP, each year a specific number of academies will be accepted into the service programs based on the strength of their application and their willingness to complete program requirements. Academies that are not selected can sign up for webinars conducted by NAF staff and members of distinguished academy teams, participate in NAFConnect (where you can go to network with your peers from other Academies), and use NAF curriculum and Getting Started Guides (which provide links to numerous documents and videos) to move their academies forward.

Do you mean that Affiliate Programs don't receive any NAF services?

Although there is no guided program for Affiliates, each Affiliate's Academy team can use the YOP process and the Getting Started Guides available on NAF's website to access a range of self-guided services which are available to all Academies. These self-guided services include 16 Getting Started Guides and NAFConnect. Affiliates also have access to all NAF curriculum online.

Where does our academy rank, and how will this be determined? What if we don't agree? Can we appeal?

It's natural to think of this as a "ranking" system, but that is not the intent. Simply put, your team will conduct the self-assessment, and the resulting score will place your Academy within one of the four membership levels. After conducting the assessment, you will have a chance to share and discuss your results with your NAF Regional Director, and your membership level may be altered based on other evidence you provide.

How much will this cost our Academy?

NAF is determined not to use this model to impose higher fees on Academies. Each Academy will continue to pay the same annual membership fee: \$1,000. Naturally, it will cost NAF additional money to provide services such as ARC and ASPIRE. However, NAF will seek to raise funds for these programs from private donors, many of whom have expressed an interest in helping NAF provide greater services to Academies.

How can NAF judge our Academy without even visiting our school?

NAF is not seeking to judge Academies; you will be conducting your own self-assessment, which is based on factors determined by research and long experience to make a difference in the Academy experience for young people. You will also continue to provide self-reported data online, which will provide a fuller picture of your Academy.



What is the incentive for our Academy to go from Member to Leader?

Each membership level along the network continuum receives the benefit of additional services. These are provided as an incentive for Academies to make progress along elements of the NAF model. For example, Leader Academies will be eligible for opportunities for deeper engagement with NAF and network colleagues.

It sounds like NAF will be asking more from Academies at the Distinguished Level.

It is indeed NAF's intention that with new services come new opportunities and responsibilities. NAF is creating a platform to enable network to support each other. Academies in the Leader and Distinguished stages will be called on to conduct webinars, assist academies asking for assistance and participate in curriculum development opportunities such as the Curriculum Fellows and similar programs that will be developed to support the other pillars. Students in these academies will be called on to participate in national conferences and will have access to additional scholarship opportunities.

If our Academy is in the process of implementing a new program, how do we assess ourselves?

It is true that NAF Academies are expected to enhance their programs in such areas as curriculum, advisory boards, or internships. Once you have fully implemented such changes, these will likely result in stronger overall results for your students and higher scores on your self-assessment. In the meantime, be aware that the self-assessment includes a range of factors, including growth features for enhancing and sustaining Academy development. Thus, your work in all areas of the Academy model will affect your overall membership level.

Will NAF be checking up on us, and acting like a "big brother"?

NAF strives to act as a partner to its network, especially through the ongoing relationships between its Regional Directors and the Academies with whom they work. We hope and expect that your self-assessment and resulting membership level will result in a conversation with your Regional Director, and that, together, you will identify targeted areas to improve and sustain your Academy each year. NAF will rely on Leader and Distinguished academies to support new

Is this just another idea that will come to pass? Is this going to all change again in the near future?

Veterans of NAF have seen a number of changes throughout the years, so this is a legitimate concern. In this case, however, the notion of identifying and servicing Academies through different membership levels is one that came from the NAF Board of Directors, which is committed to seeing this model through the long-term. The business and educational leaders who comprise this Board have determined that targeting services along the continuum is a powerful leverage point for improving Academy performance and student outcomes. Although the continuum for service delivery will not change, we are likely to improve the self assessment tool and the services associated with the programs as a result of your participation.

This is all well and good. But why shouldn't our Academy simply leave NAF and continue on our own?

That is a choice for any Academy to make, though we hope you won't. There are a number of Academies not affiliated with NAF, who are not able to benefit from the services available in this network. By participating in the NAF network, you can take advantage of cutting edge and industry validated curriculum, NAF's emerging service programs (such as ARC and ASPIRE), sponsored attendance to the NAF Annual Institute, and a collaborative network of like-minded educators and partners.

Students in my state must take 24 credits to graduate (including 4 years of Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science), which does not leave enough electives in their schedule to make a three or four year program possible. How can my academy be punished for state mandates it cannot control?

We recognize that many Academies are in this situation. NAF is working in many states to get its curriculum recognized, which will alleviate one concern. In addition, the number of courses your Academy offers is only one of a range of factors that go into the self-assessment. Ultimately, the strength of your Academy will be based on your educators, students, and partners, and that will be reflected in your assessment results.

Other Questions? -- Please contact your Regional Director. NAF is eager to hear your feedback, thoughts, and concerns. Regional Directors' contact information is provided at www.naf.org.