



Steps to Finding an AMC

Adapted by RGI from the AMC Institute

Finding, selecting and contracting with an Association Management Company (AMC) is a valuable process in and of itself, but it does take time. For many associations, this process helps Board members capture a snapshot of their organizations and clarify current and future needs.

There are five basic steps for choosing an AMC:

1. **Identifying your needs** and parameters by conducting an organizational audit and articulating gaps in the tools, skills, staffing and time demanded to meet your long-term objectives. You'll also need to articulate your core organizational values to look for an AMC with similar values and culture.

This is also a critical time for the board to gain focus and consensus on:

- The organizations' goals and outcomes, now and for the future.
- Role delineation between tasks done by board/volunteers and the AMC. This is particularly important for organizations with heavy volunteer involvement and/or limited financial resources. This analysis should factor in the reality of volunteers' time as well as prioritize where staffing from an AMC can make the most impact or allow volunteers' expertise to be utilized most effectively.

2. **Learning More about AMCs.** Do your due diligence to understand the full spectrum of what AMCs offer and the different ways they structure their relationships with clients. Talk to other associations managed by AMCs. Have an AMC professional come and speak to your Board.

Below are strengths and challenges of various models:

Option	Strengths	Challenges
Member Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong commitment to organization • Understand organization's mission • Lower direct costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited time availability • Not experts at nonprofit organization management and operations • Leadership turnover creates inconsistencies • Potential for conflicts of

Option	Strengths	Challenges
		interest
Employed Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% "ownership" of all paid staff and association resources • Good opportunity for staff continuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High overhead costs and long-term commitments (e.g. office space, equipment, operating systems, furniture) • Possible challenges in staffing key positions given competitive compensation costs for highly qualified, full-time staff • Risks associated with being an employer • Requires more leadership time on administrative, operational functions
AMC-Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts in association management, operations, including accredited operations for some AMCs • Lower overhead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associations sometimes outgrow their AMC's capabilities • Specific industry knowledge/expertise sometimes must be developed or

Option	Strengths	Challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise in multiple disciplines • Flexible staffing in times of growth or downsizing • Eliminates many typical legal risks associated with employee management • Easily accessible knowledge, experience from other associations • Continuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquired
AMC-Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the nonprofit environment, dynamics • Cost effective extension, enhancement of staff expertise, capabilities • Depth and breadth of staff experience allows AMCs to plug in quickly to a project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of work and mutual expectations must be clearly defined and stated

3. Preparing and Disseminating a Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP should address the information below, as appropriate:

- Organization Name
- Website address
- Type of organization (trade association, professional society, foundation, other)
- Geographic scope of the organization
- What is the membership structure (individual members, are companies members)?
- How many members do you currently have by category of membership?
- Number of Board members; how often does the board meet and how (in person; conference call)?
- What prompted your search?
- Proposal deadline; timeline for hiring a new AMC; tentative start date for new firm?
- What is the current budget for AMC services? This may seem strange to indicate, but knowing your budget can allow firms to provide a better proposal to actually meet your needs as well as your budget.
- Must your new AMC be headquartered in a specific location?
- Role delineation of AMC staff versus volunteer roles
- Number of committees
- What is your current structure? (AMC, standalone, volunteers)
- If previously managed by an AMC, how many years has the organization been with its current management?
- Has current management been asked to submit a proposal?
- Has current management been notified of the search?
- Will current management submit a proposal to continue?
- Has the organization's board authorized this search?
- How much staff or how many staff hours does the organization have with their current structure?
- Does the organization believe this will be different with a new AMC?
- How important is it for you to hire an AMC Institute Accredited AMC?
- How do you want the proposals delivered to you? Who should get them?

Services requested - below is a list of services AMCs often provide. Include those services the organization desires. Offer some level of detail for each service (i.e. annual convention in October for three days with 400 attendees and 20 exhibits). Remember that if the AMC has a clear picture of your needs your proposal will be more accurate.

- Accreditation/Certification/Standard Development
- Administration
- Board meetings
- Committees, Task Forces, Interest Groups
- Communication
- Educational Workshops/Seminars
- Financials and accounting
- Fundraising/Sponsorships
- Headquarters and infrastructure
- Marketing

- Meetings/Conventions planning
- Membership administration
- Membership development
- Membership management
- Other (please specify)
- Public relations
- Publications
- Research and statistical programs
- Specialized Government Relations/Lobbying
- Web and Interactive Services

4. **Evaluating and Selecting your AMC.** Do your research to compare and evaluate the proposals that get submitted. This should include evaluation of each AMC: years of experience; client mix; client loyalty/track record; staffing options; services and capabilities; leadership, and accreditation status.

5. **Making the Transition.** Once an AMC is selected, they will help the organization prepare a detailed transition plan.