

Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) is a list of functions a participant must be able to perform in order to safely participate in a program. Having a written EEC policy allows you to evaluate every participant through a standard set of rules to ensure that you are not discriminating against any single person. These policies also allow your staff and volunteers to understand and be comfortable with explaining the requirements for participation in a positive, inclusive way.

As you're developing your EEC, approach your criteria from an angle of inclusion. All statements should be broken down to the basic skill required to participate safely so that you can focus on ability rather than disability. The goal should not be to keep anyone from participating. Instead, the goal should be to give your organization and potential participant the information they need to make an accurate, objective assessment of whether or not an activity is appropriate for them and their skill level.

Below are some steps and questions to consider when developing an EEC. Prior to posting your EEC on your website and program materials, consider reaching out to your regional American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) Technical Assistance Center and your legal counsel to ensure that your EEC is written in a non-discriminatory way that holds up to ADA inclusion requirements. Continue to review your EEC on a regular basis as program changes may affect EEC requirements, and you may decide that pieces of your EEC are no longer required, or another piece may need to be added.

Steps to Developing and Implementing Your EEC:

1. Reach out to the NGB/NGO of the Activity You're Providing.
 - a. Several organizations have already created EEC for their sport. Instead of reinventing the wheel, consider asking whether you can adopt their hard work.
2. Break Your Activity into Steps.
 - a. Transportation, Arrival on Site, Putting on Equipment, Using Equipment, etc.
3. At Each Step, Consider the Following:
 - a. What are the physical and mental abilities needed?
 - b. What are the safety considerations? What will mostly likely cause harm or injury?
 - c. What are the basic rules of etiquette you must follow?
 - d. Can required activities be met with the help of a companion?
4. Write Your Criteria Using the List You've Come Up with Above.
 - a. Use simple, understandable, inclusive language.
 - b. Do not use limiting words such as walk, speak, etc. Instead describe the result needed, such as access, notify, identify, etc. which can be done through a number of adaptive means.
5. Read the Criteria You've Identified, and Edit for Simplicity.
6. Have EEC Reviewed by Staff, ADA Experts, Legal Counsel
7. Post EEC on your Website and Program Materials.
8. Ensure your Intake Forms Match Your EEC
 - a. Are you asking questions that provide programs staff with the information they need to determine eligibility?
9. Document Any Decisions Where a Potential Participant Wouldn't Meet EEC
10. Review Your EEC on a Regular Basis

As you may have realize while working through this process, EEC will vary by sport or activity. A short hike through your local park with access to accessible restrooms will have very different EEC than an overnight back country hiking trip. Criteria should be written on a program by program basis, and not written to be inclusive of every activity you provide.

Sample EEC:

- [American Canoe Association](#)
- [National Outdoor Leadership School](#)
- [American Camp Association](#)
- [Special Olympics Wisconsin](#)
- [West Virginia University Adventure Trips](#) (Non-Adaptive)

Resources to Consider:

- [National Center on Accessibility](#)
- [Regional ADA Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [American Camp Association](#)