
Murie Science and Learning Center Management Plan

Revised May, 2019

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I. INTRODUCTION

Located in Denali National Park and Preserve (DENA, Denali, the park), the Murie Science and Learning Center (MSLC) is run by DENA in collaboration with a non-profit Managing Partner. The MSLC primarily works with and serves visitors and organizations local to the Denali area, with support to and from other Alaskan national parks and their partners.

Mission and Goals

The mission of the MSLC is to promote science and stewardship on behalf of Denali and other national parks in Alaska, with a particular focus on serving youth. The MSLC is part of a national effort to increase scientific literacy by showcasing research from living laboratories like the park. Specific goals include:

1. Engage the public with park science through interactive learning programs with the purpose of improving scientific understanding and environmental stewardship.
 - a. Prioritize sharing park science with youth and underserved audiences, with the goal of engaging younger generations as park advocates and stewards.
 - b. Engage Denali visitors and staff in park science through narratives, citizen science, and hands-on activities.
 - c. Create training opportunities for Denali-area staff on key science topics and techniques for effective science communication.
 - d. Promote park science to Denali's managers, and share science-based-management-decision stories with all audiences.
 - e. Support all Alaska parks in effectively communicating science.
 - f. Improve the quality and quantity of park science being shared by building and facilitating overlap and synergy between scientists and education staff.
2. Assess and evaluate MSLC activities and adapt as necessary to achieve the mission.
3. Facilitate science and scholarship in Denali National Park & Preserve.

History

The Murie Science and Learning Center is one of 18 Research Learning Centers initiated in association with the National Park Service's Natural Resource Challenge in 2000. The goal of the Challenge was to promote more and better science in our national parks, to use scientific findings to make sound management decisions, and to share what is learned about these natural areas more effectively with the public. The MSLC is also the home base for the DENA education team and its programs, and currently serves as Denali's main off-season Visitor Center from late September through mid-May. MSLC came into existence as an organizational concept in 2003, and moved into its present facilities in 2005.

Facilities

Existing MSLC facilities in the DENA frontcountry include a main building, a dining facility which is shared by written agreement with the park concessionaire Joint-Venture, and a 3-bedroom yurt. The main building contains an exhibit area for visitors, a large, dividable classroom with audiovisual equipment and a wireless guest network, a conference room, and office space capable of hosting approximately 15 educators, visiting researchers, and administrators. Addition of new cabins to the frontcountry campus is planned beginning in 2020. These cabins will be constructed through the DENA School-to-Work program and are intended for use as housing for Managing Partner staff and visiting researchers on a seasonal and temporary basis. Construction and Management agreements for these housing units are in development with the Managing Partner (May, 2019).

MSLC also manages a field camp located at Teklanika Campground at Mile 30 of the park road. The field camp features six tent cabins (sleeps 24 total), a food storage facility, and a yurt.

II. OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT

Advisory Committee

Denali National Park and Preserve is responsible for overseeing the MSLC, including approving programs, forging partnerships, and controlling financial decisions. The DENA Superintendent has ultimate decision-making authority over MSLC, and has delegated that authority to the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is comprised of the DENA Deputy Superintendent and the Team Leads for the divisions of Education and Interpretation, External Affairs, and Resources and Science, and NPS Director for MSLC. In instances where there is not a conflict of interest, the Managing Partner organization's Executive Director and MSLC Program Director also serve as members of the Advisory Committee.

Managing Partner

MSLC functions as a public-private partnership between NPS and a non-profit Managing Partner. The Managing Partner is authorized via a General Agreement. The Managing Partner has been Alaska Geographic since the inception of the MSLC in 2003. The Managing Partner is evaluated every ten years by the NPS members of the MSLC Advisory Committee, or more often if necessary. Privileges associated with serving as the Managing Partner include use of MSLC office space and facilities, access to park resources for approved programs, and the inclusion of the organizational name on some MSLC program materials. In exchange, the Managing Partner

commits 100% of gross revenues from all fee-based programs towards NPS-approved MSLC programs, functions and facilities. No revenue may be committed to shareholders, individuals, or operations that fall outside of the purview of MSLC.

The MSLC Managing Partner is required to conduct ten or more varieties of free and fee-based science outreach programs for youth and adults in Denali and other northern Alaska parks each year. Programs must meet diverse audience needs by ranging in length from hour-long to multi-day, and by being targeted to specific audiences including Alaskans, non-Alaskan visitors, youth, and park and park-partner employees. Programs, services, and fees of the Managing Partner reflect a balance of meeting the mission goals of the MSLC and generating revenue to support free outreach programs.

Program offerings of the Managing Partner may include any of the following:

- Reception/presentation events in the MSLC classrooms and exhibit area and the Murie Dining Hall.
- Guided hikes on designated trails
- Programs in the Murie Dining Hall that include food service by the Concessioner
- Bus excursions
- Overnight programs at the Teklanika Field Camp
- Youth programs

Services of the Managing Partner include:

- MSLC Classroom rentals
- Murie Dining Hall rentals and food service arrangements
- Teklanika Field Camp overnight accommodations
- Managing Partner vehicle use/rentals
- Grant facilitation

A review of whether the Managing Partner is fulfilling its obligations occurs annually in conjunction with the MSLC budget review process. If needed, the NPS members of the Advisory Committee may determine a plan for the Managing Partner to return to compliance. Either partner may terminate the agreement if compliance has not been met by the agreed-upon deadline.

Management Team

The NPS designates a Director to represent NPS interests in and authority over MSLC. The Managing Partner likewise designates a Program Director to represent its organization at MSLC. Both individuals work on site year-round and are integral to MSLC operations. Together these two individuals comprise the Management Team, which makes most day-to-day operational decisions on behalf of MSLC.

Business Plans

The MSLC is guided by a business plan model comprised of a Strategic Plan, a Management Plan and Operating Procedures (Table 1). The Strategic Plan provides long-term vision and goals for MSLC. The Management Plan defines roles and responsibilities for DENA, the MSLC Managing Partner, and other MSLC partners, and outlines the overarching structure of MSLC

operations. Operating Procedures provide details for the safe, professional and consistent operations of MSLC facilities.

Table 1: MSLC business plan model

Strategic Plan	Management Plan	Operating Procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational mission, vision, goals, objectives for next 5 – 10 years. Revised by Management Team every 2 – 3 years with input from Advisory Committee; current version is 2016-2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives, standards, guidelines, key roles and responsibilities, business structure. Revised by DENA with input from Managing Partner when significant modifications needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor Center SOPs Field Camp SOP MSLC Facilities: space booking protocols and fees Revised by Management Team annually and as needed.

III. MANAGING PARTNER PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND BUDGET

Annual Reports

Year-end budget and program reports are generated by the Managing Partner Program Director by November every year (Table 2). These are reviewed by the Advisory Committee both electronically and in person.

Program Proposals

By November each year, the Managing Partner Program Director drafts a detailed annual program proposal, budget, and programs and services menu in consultation with the NPS MSLC Director.

The annual program proposal, budget, and programs and services menu are due in November annually (Table 2). These documents are reviewed by the Advisory Committee during a November meeting. Signed approval of these documents must be granted by the DENA Deputy Superintendent and the Managing Partner Director.

Table 2: Target timeframes for MSLC Managing Partner (MP) programming, budgeting, and reporting and Advisory Committee (AC) meetings

MP submits MSLC annual program proposal, budget, programs and services menu to AC for review	November 1
AC meets to review summaries and proposals	Mid-November
MP board reviews proposed MSLC budget for approval	Mid-December
AC approves MSLC annual program proposal	December 31
MP finalizes MSLC budget	February 1
AC meets to review emergent topics	March (annually)

Fees for programs, services, and facility usages differ depending on the type of user and the level of service. Rates are revised annually using local comparables. Menus and food prices for the Murie Dining Hall are determined by the Management Team in partnership with the concessioner and approved by Commercial Services.

Program Evaluation

The Managing Partner is responsible for evaluating its own programs for quality, consistency, and efficacy using their organization's educational standards. NPS also evaluates all MSLC programs annually using Denali Interpretation program evaluation standards. MSLC partner staff are invited to participate in NPS coaching and training programs.

IV. USE AND OWNERSHIP OF FACILITIES, RESOURCES, AND EQUIPMENT

Park Road

MSLC conducts all transportation operations within DENA in accordance with existing park regulations and state and federal laws. The Managing Partner may offer a limited number of fee-based charter bus excursions on the park road. The number of excursions permitted is subject to annual approval. Both organizations seek to use Concessions transportation services for youth programs and other transportation needs whenever practicable.

NPS allocates road permits annually to support MSLC activities in accordance with the Vehicle Management Plan. The Management Team coordinates use of available road permits in support of MSLC activities in consultation with and as approved by the Advisory Committee. As of 2018, the total number of MSLC vehicles authorized to travel past the Savage River check station per year was 200.

Backcountry

All MSLC programs function in accordance with the Backcountry Management Plan and maintain highest standards of Leave No Trace. Hiking routes used for all MSLC programs are reported according to park-designated protocols. Research-related MSLC activities that are not permitted under the MSLC Categorical Exclusion must go through the park research permitting system.

Trails

MSLC hiking group sizes are set in accordance with the Backcountry Management Plan and restrict guided groups to no more than 12 people on wilderness trails. On non-wilderness trails, guided groups will not exceed 25 participants, and are typically around 15 participants. The Managing Partner may offer guided hikes on any park trail given annual approval. Which trails may be used and group size limits are subject to annual approval advance based on resource impacts and other mission-related considerations.

MSLC Facilities

The MSLC main building, Murie/Sugarloaf Dining Hall building, Teklanika Field Camp, and MSLC yurt are owned by NPS. All are operated by NPS except for the Murie/Sugarloaf Dining Hall building, which is operated by the concessioner. Ownership and operation of the planned cabins for housing on the MSLC campus is being determined separately as of this writing. Any agreements, operating plans, or similar documentation regarding construction and subsequent occupancy and maintenance of the cabins, will append this document.

The MSLC Management Team is responsible for overseeing the use and scheduling of the MSLC classrooms and conference room, the Murie Dining Hall, the Teklanika Field Camp, and the MSLC yurt. Priority in booking these facilities goes to:

1. NPS-MSLC and MSLC Managing Partner education and research activities
2. Other NPS and NPS-sponsored uses (trainings, meetings, etc.)
3. Other educational uses
4. Limited non-educational uses

The vast majority of usages for these facilities are either free or accounted for within the cost structure of existing fee-based programs offered by the MSLC Managing Partner. All no-cost usages of MSLC facilities are self-service unless otherwise arranged. When groups other than NPS and the Managing Partner wish to use these facilities for non-revenue-generating programs and the schedule allows, the requesting group will likely be granted permission to do so at no cost.

When groups other than NPS and the Managing Partner wish to use these facilities for revenue-generating programs, they must work with the NPS and the Managing Partner to offer the program and secure any necessary permits or agreement to offer the program. Fees for usages will be determined according to the MSLC programs and services menu unless they are otherwise arranged for in the permit or agreement. For fee-based field camp usages, groups will be directed to utilize Managing Partner staff, food, and transportation services unless otherwise arranged for in the permit or agreement.

Facility use requests by NPS and Managing Partner staff can be processed anytime. Requests by others for spring, summer and fall (February 15 – October 15) events can typically be processed starting November 1. Requests for winter (October 16 – February 14) events can typically be processed starting August 1.

Only NPS staff, Managing Partner MSLC staff, and official interns and volunteers are given keys to MSLC facilities. Official visiting researchers, approved trainers, and teachers with visiting school groups may be loaned a key for the duration of their visit. Background checks are required for all permanent and seasonal MSLC staff, including official volunteers.

MSLC Exhibit Sales Area

The DENA Cooperating Association may be asked to maintain a sales area in the MSLC main building to sell interpretive materials at certain times of year. MSLC front desk staff conduct sales on behalf of the Cooperating Association.

MSLC Equipment

The Management Team seeks shared, efficient use of common resources, including storage space, always seeking the most efficient and effective uses of said resources. It is the Managing Partner's responsibility to provide the equipment, Information Technology, and communications necessary for their operation. However, NPS may assist with providing these items and services on a case-by-case basis.

Established NPS protocols for equipment ownership and transfer of equipment between organizations are followed. Property used primarily for Managing Partner programs is retained as that organization’s property until it is no longer needed or the partnership dissolves, in which case it becomes NPS property.

MSLC equipment, regardless of ownership, is not available for personal use by any individuals unless permitted by the MSLC Management Team. All employees and guests are informed to use discretion, keeping bandwidth in mind, when using the internet for personal reasons during non-work time.

Managing Partner Vehicles

The Managing Partner may purchase, register, and insure vehicles in support of MSLC programs. As of 2019, this is two Sprinter style vans. These vehicles can be utilized by NPS or other partners at the Management Team’s discretion. Prices for different types of usages are outlined in the MSLC programs and services menu. Priority in bookings goes to 1) Managing Partner educational programs, 2) NPS requests, and 3) other educational request. Risk management procedures such as background checks must be followed in adherence with Managing Partner policies. Managing Partner vehicles purchased for MSLC educational programs become NPS property if the managing partnership is dissolved.

V. KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Key roles for NPS and the Managing Partner are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Key MSLC roles and responsibilities

Program Area or Task	Lead Organization
Finances	
Managing Partner Fund Allocation and Management	MP & NPS
NPS Fund Sources	NPS
Additional Funding (grants, etc.)	Assigned as needed
Facility Operations	
Front-Country Facilities	NPS
Winter Front Desk Operations	NPS
Summer Front Desk Operations	MP &/or NPS
Sales Area	Cooperating Association
Field Camp and Yurt	MP
Library	MP
AV Equipment	MP
MSLC Website	NPS
Facility Calendar	MP & NPS
Exhibit Area	NPS
Offices	NPS

Bulletin Boards	NPS
NPS Cisco IP Phones	NPS
Liaison to NPS Maintenance	NPS
Programs	
Partner Program Approvals	MP & NPS
Multi-Day Field Courses	MP & NPS
Teacher Trainings & Scholarships	MP & NPS
Research and Partner Park Grants	MP & NPS
Virtual and In-school Curricula	NPS
Junior Ranger & Discovery Pack	NPS
Visiting Group Services	MP & NPS
Annual Report Compilations	MP & NPS
Program Evaluations	NPS & Partners
Partnerships	
Liaison to Partners	MP & NPS
Liaison to Concessionaire	MP & NPS

Note: MP = Managing Partner

Staff Activities Outside of MSLC Program Areas

It is assumed that NPS and Managing Partner staff at MSLC may have duties not directly related to MSLC (e.g. organizational strategic plans, hiring committees, within-organization consultation). As a guideline, these duties are expected to constitute approximately 10% of any individual staff person’s time for either organization. NPS and Managing Partner supervisors retain the discretion to assign additional project work.

Meetings/Communications

Communication within the Management Team takes place regularly (weekly to monthly on average). During these meetings, the NPS MSLC Director is the proxy for the DENA Superintendent and is responsible for keeping the Superintendent’s office informed if warranted. Direct communications between the Management Team and the Advisory Committee occur as needed (twice yearly at minimum).

VI. FINANCES

Managing Partner Finances and Accounting

The Managing Partner retains all revenue from MSLC fee-based programs, donations, and sales of specified revenue-generating products in designated accounts. Financial statements are maintained in a transparent, pre-agreed-upon format and made available for annual approval and by request. All MSLC funds are accounted for separately from the Managing Partner organization’s other financial accounts. Subaccounts for specific grants are created as needed.

In the event that the NPS dissolves its partnership with the Managing Partner, either at the end of the partnership term or due to non-compliance, all revenues generated by the Managing Partner for MSLC operations are transferred to NPS.

Procurement of Additional Funds

NPS and the Managing Partner may identify projects and specific needs that require additional funding (e.g., field camp development, joint research/education projects, distance education programs, staff housing or a residential facility at park entrance area, etc.). NPS seeks to enhance educational funding through the federal appropriations process, pursuit of grants, and/or by educating the public about gift acceptance authority and NPS needs through “wish lists” or other authorized means. The Managing Partner administers grants, as necessary, in accordance with MSLC objectives. Any fundraising efforts undertaken by the Managing Partner expressly for the benefit of MSLC are in accordance with NPS Director’s Order 21.

Entrance Fees

The Managing Partner collects entrance fees for all fee-based MSLC programs and remits them to NPS monthly. Groups with valid educational fee waivers and individuals possessing a valid park pass, who are under the age of 16, or who have paid an entrance fee within the last seven days, are exempt from paying a fee.

VII. PARTNERING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

DENA and the Managing Partner regularly collaborate with, and provide services on behalf of, individuals and groups from organizations that share similar missions. This generally entails offering programs and services for these entities at the appropriate fee level. However, it may occasionally take the shape of a formal or informal partnership. In these instances financial and resource-use arrangements must be approved by DENA and credit shared among partners in a mutually agreed-upon fashion. In instances where the MSLC cannot meet the request of the prospective collaborator, that entity may seek other (non-MSLC) arrangements through DENA’s division of External Affairs.

VIII. NAME USAGE AND PROGRAM PROMOTION

NPS and the Managing Partner will generally be the entities with which the public identifies, rather than the MSLC itself. To this end, it is appropriate that MSLC programs are primarily affiliated with the names and logos of the partners involved. Some specific ways in which credit and organizational affiliation should be designated include:

- NPS staff conducting MSLC programs wear the NPS uniform and arrowhead badge. Likewise, Managing Partner staff wear the uniform and logo of their organization while conducting MSLC programs.
- All programs functioning under the MSLC umbrella are identified as MSLC partnership programs in printed and web-based written materials and in orally-presented program introductions and credits. Likewise, programs funded by MSLC give credit to MSLC and all contributing partners in written materials and program introductions/credits. When multiple partner organizations are involved, all organizations that have provided direct financial support are recognized by name and logo in addition to MSLC.

- The MSLC logo is used on all digital and printed MSLC program materials

MSLC partners can use the NPS Arrowhead symbol and other approved NPS logos to promote MSLC partnership programs and activities in accordance with Director's Order #52D and with permission of the Superintendent. The Arrowhead may not be used in association with fundraising activities.

An MSLC website is maintained by the NPS MSLC Director with input from the Managing Partner Program Director. Compliance with RCL and NPS visual and content standards is sought for all content.

IX. RISK MANAGEMENT

To protect all participants and partner organizations involved in the MSLC consortium, all MSLC partners maintain safety and risk management practices that meet or exceed industry standards for remote education activities. In some instances there may be differences in the permissible practices existing between organizations. In this case the organization that collects fees and/or would be considered as the lead responsible party by a reasonable jury holds the liability and has the ultimate authority on the practices allowed.

All MSLC partners must conform to the following risk management practices:

- All partners must have Risk Management Plans that meet industry standards. These plans are reviewed by NPS on an annual basis.
- Partners and NPS annually review and confirm emergency response practices for MSLC programs with advisement from the DENA Communications Center.
- Per DOI policy, partner organizations are generally prohibited from seeking 'risk release' signatures from participants for in-park activities. However, these organizations are encouraged to have participants sign an acknowledgement of risk form (participant agreement).

X. ETHICS

Due to the very close working relationship between NPS and the Managing Partner in particular, and the ambiguity as to which organization MSLC staff persons serve, it is the professional responsibility of the MSLC Management Team to ensure the highest standards of ethics are followed in the service of public trust. United States Government Executive Orders 12674 and 12731 state 14 general principles that broadly define the obligations of public service.

Underlying these 14 principles are four core concepts:

1. Employees shall not use public office for private gain
2. Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
3. Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

In addition, NPS and Managing partner employees must strive to avoid any action that would create the appearance that they are violating United States Government laws or ethical standards. By observing these general principles, and specific ethics standards, employees help to ensure that citizens have confidence in the integrity of Government operations and the Managing Partner organization.

XI. AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE

for Denise Swankes 23 May 2019
Don Striker, Superintendent Date
Denali National Park and Preserve