

Unifying Voices

Creating a Co-operative of freelance Outdoor Learning professionals



Over the past few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit self-employed or micro-business owners hard across our sector.

There has been over £5 million lost income (to Jan 2021) reported by 361 respondents in the IOL Sector Impact Survey.

Through a series of IOL-supported webinars in Spring 2020, a core group within the Outdoor Learning community emerged, eager for a unified sector voice on issues that effect freelancers.

Championed by Stuart Meese, a proposal was made to form a Co-operative of freelance Outdoor Learning professionals within the IOL membership structure. The Institute already has an active Employer's Group that brings together larger Outdoor companies and providers, but this new co-operative is specifically for self-employed and micro-businesses who are providing both client-facing and B2B contract services in the Outdoor sector, i.e. freelancers.

What is the Co-operative?

A professional networking, guidance, mentoring, support and representation for the freelance Outdoor Learning community.

What's the aim?

The aim is to provide a home for Outdoor Learning freelancers who are seeking to be clearly defined as providers of high-quality Outdoor Learning and experiences. Freelancers will be reflective, accredited and aligned to a professional code of conduct and set of occupational standards.

The group will be looking to form key partnerships for specialist advice such as insurance, business practice, employment rights, financial management, contracts, compliance with UK law, etc. The group are also keen to set up a business mentoring scheme for members who are looking to set up their

own business or service using our community of established IOL coaches and business leaders.

What's next?

A first objective will be to create a freelance charter; a voluntary adoption document that sets out minimum expectations on both sides in a contract for work arrangement. Working with employers to negotiate and agree the details, the charter will be a starting point when setting contractual terms and conditions of work that are clear, transparent, and fair to both parties.

The first formal meeting of the Co-operative of freelance Outdoor Learning professionals is taking place in July 2020. IOL is delighted to support this initiative and is looking forward to seeing what developments this valuable section of the Outdoor Learning sector can create ■

AUTHORS

Neal Anderson
IOL Professional Standards Manager

Stuart Meese
Director of Black Dog Adventures
and leading practitioner for IOL

IMAGES

Image has been sourced at pxhere.com with original photographers retaining copyright.