



Pinnacle Partner Handbook

About Outward Bound California

Outward Bound is a non-profit educational organization that serves people of all ages and backgrounds through active learning expeditions that inspire character development, self-discovery and service. Outward Bound delivers programs using remote outdoor settings as a way for participants across the country to experience adventure and challenge in a way that helps students realize they can do more than they thought possible.

Outward Bound California Pinnacle Program

The Pinnacle Scholarship at Outward Bound California was founded in 1992. The program is guided by a single principle: **that every person should be given the opportunity to experience adventure and challenge, develop character and compassion, and learn social and environmental responsibility, regardless of financial status.** It is Outward Bound California's vision to open access to safe, transformational outdoor experiences and green spaces to students from economically vulnerable communities and communities of color and other non-dominant identities. Thanks to the generosity of many individuals, corporations and foundations, Outward Bound is able to offer scholarships that help make this principle a reality.

How do you fit in?

Pinnacle Partners provide essential support to students in the recruitment and preparation process. Partners are often school counselors, teachers, community leaders or other youth advocates dedicated to helping youth reach their potential.

Partners assist us by spreading the word about Pinnacle opportunities, identifying and recruiting appropriate scholar candidates, supporting students through the application process, helping them to prepare for their course, and arranging student's travel to and from the course start and end location, including cost, although a travel stipend is available from Outward Bound California.





Expectations for Pinnacle Partners

- **Learn about OBCA programming**
 - If you have any questions about our courses, please contact our Outreach Manager, Eli Fox (efox@obca.org) for support prior to selecting applicants.
- **Get to know your Scholars and their families**
 - Partners who have a relationship with students and their families are better able to address any potential challenges and enlist support throughout the process. Application materials require a parent or guardian signature.
- **Check-In with your Scholars**
 - The journey to and through course is a long one, and support from partners at all points along the way is crucial to student success. Partners are expected to help students submit the initial Pinnacle Application, provide support through the application process, and ensure that students are mentally, emotionally and physically prepared for their course.
- **Be available during course**
 - In the event that a student is struggling during the course, OBCA needs to be able to connect with the partner or other contact that the partner agency. If a student needs to leave course early for any reason, we will need your help in arranging travel back home.
- **Follow-up after course**
 - A student's journey does not end on the last day of course. Learnings from the field will be applied back home and your support is essential to facilitating this transference. Partners are asked to conduct post-course check-ins with their students and provide OBCA with feedback during fall debriefs.

Guidelines for Selecting Pinnacle Scholars

Outward Bound California courses are often harder than students expect. During a course, students meet a new group of people, live entirely outdoors, carry heavy packs, sleep on the ground, go without showers, deal with inclement weather and eat basic, sometimes unfamiliar foods. Applicants need to know what to expect from an Outward Bound California course and should consider their decision to attend carefully. More than anything else, **students must want to participate**.

Scholar Candidates should:

- Be personally motivated to participate in and complete an Outward Bound California course.
- Demonstrate leadership potential or skills, commitment, enthusiasm and follow-through.
- Have financial need.
- Show commitment to completing all pre- and post-course responsibilities.

Outward Bound Courses Are Not:

- Survival courses – students will not learn to fish, hunt or forage for food in the wilderness or make fires.
- Summer camp – students will not stay in cabins.
- Boot camp – students will not do any type of paramilitary activities.
- A program where students are forced against their will to stay – students must choose to participate in a manner that is safe and respectful of the environment, themselves, and others.



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Questions to consider when choosing candidates: In addition to our [Essential Eligibility Criteria](#), please ask yourself the following questions when considering your student:

- Are they interested in personal growth and change?
- Are they active in a leadership or mentoring program?
- Are they ready for and open to physical challenge, even discomfort?
- To what extent can they cope with emotional challenges and ambiguity?
- Do they demonstrate compassion for others?
- Do they have a realistic picture of what an Outward Bound course involves?
- Are they willing to prepare mentally, physically and emotionally for course?
- Are their parents/guardians in support of this experience?
- Are they prepared to spend 14 days away from home?

Outward Bound California's Medical and Behavioral Criteria for Accepting Students

An Outward Bound Course is not necessarily the right fit for everyone. Some students, even those who otherwise demonstrate initiative and leadership skills, are not emotionally or physically ready to complete a course. Outward Bound depends on partners to ensure that the applicants they nominate are a good fit for a course at this time.

Assessment is done on a case by case basis. Supplementary medical or behavioral questionnaires may be required upon review of the medical record, as certain conditions require additional information. Clearance for course is not guaranteed until all requested information and paperwork has been received, reviewed, and cleared by the Student Services team.

Outward Bound California is committed to accepting as many students as possible; we will work diligently to get every applicant on course. Please be advised that in some cases it may not be possible for OBCA to safely accommodate a student's medical, psychological or physical needs.

Pinnacle Application Process

The application process occurs in two steps: the initial Pinnacle Scholarship Application and secondary Course Application. Ability to participate is contingent upon OBCA's review and approval of all required paperwork. Please read the list below thoroughly so you know all the steps required to ensure the greatest success for your applicant.

- Prior to Nomination:**
 - Encourage students to read through the Pinnacle Scholar Handbook**
 - Check with your student's parents/guardians, as parental support can make a big difference for success on course.**
 - Review our course options on [the Pinnacle website](#)**
 - Talk about expectations.** Outward Bound California asks students to come prepared to put forth their best effort, try new activities, work as part of a group, and follow



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instructions. All Pinnacle applicants should be personally invested and engaged from the day they submit the application through the entirety of the course and its follow-up.

- **Nomination/Application**
 - **Partners:** Complete and submit the Partner Nomination Application
 - **Scholars:** Complete and submit the Pinnacle Scholar Application

- **OBCA reviews applicants and extends offers**
 - If your scholar is offered a space on course, students and partners will receive an email confirming the student's place and course along with links to complete additional application materials, including: Medical Form, Liability Release Waiver, and any applicable supplemental medical screening forms. Please note that these forms must be signed by a parent or guardian for any student under 18.
 - Following the Student Services Team's medical review of application materials, students and partners will receive an email confirmation whether a student has been cleared for course.

- **Help Scholars Prepare For Course:**
 - **Get Mentally and Physically Prepared.** Review our Attending Outward Bound Page and [Physical Prep Guide](#) for information and support your scholar in making a training plan.

 - **Boot break-in:** It is **very important** that students wear and break-in their boots ahead of course. There is nothing worse than wearing a brand new pair of boots that are painful and cause blisters. To ensure this does not happen, be sure your student wears their boots around the house, to school and while running errands. [Check out this boot break-in guide.](#)

 - **Organize/obtain gear.** Pinnacle students can borrow most of the clothing they need for the course. Please review the Packing List together, and work with them to ensure they have the personal items required.

 - **Coordinate travel.** Once students are medically cleared and the course is confirmed, the partnering agency is responsible for arranging travel and covering any costs incurred in getting the student to and from their course start location. We can provide a travel stipend up to \$300.



What to Expect on Course

The Curriculum

While Outward Bound courses vary greatly in terms of course type, length, itinerary and location, there is a standard format. Courses move through a series of challenging phases as instructors gradually hand over more and more responsibility to the student group. Most activities take place in a remote outdoor environment, in the company of two instructors and up to twelve peers. The curriculum includes a variety of exciting activities that keep the students involved and engaged. Instructors are careful to adapt activities to the needs of the students at any given time.

Phase One – “Training”

Instructors provide hands-on training and lessons. Students learn the basics such as camp craft, first aid, map reading, and other essential skills they need in order to live comfortably in an outdoor environment. In addition, students learn and practice the social skills needed to develop their group into a solid and supportive community founded on mutual respect, compassion, and open communication.

Phase Two – “Main”

As the course progresses, instructors take a step back and allow students to take on increasing responsibilities that enable them to exercise their newly acquired wilderness abilities, as well as their skills in communication, decision making, and stress management. The ultimate goal of the second phase is for students to realize they are capable of a higher level of success than they thought possible. To accomplish this goal, the groups enter greater challenges. Most courses have a “solo” during this phase.

Phase Three – “Final”

At this point instructors transfer responsibility of the expedition to the students. This increase in responsibility builds on the skills students have learned on course and provides opportunities for accomplishment and independence. Working as a team, with little or no direct intervention from instructors, the student group navigates the route, coordinates the daily schedule, and makes decisions. In some cases, depending on age, skill, course length, and other factors, instructors may not be present, instead using pre-arranged check-ins to monitor group progress. Not all courses will achieve this level of independence and some may not have a final expedition.

Pre-Course Expectations

Informing Parents/Guardians

Please be sure to include and inform parents and guardians as students are considered for nomination. Many participants may not have been away from home before for an extended period of time. Many parents may be hesitant to let their child be in a remote setting for 2-3 weeks. For these reasons, it is crucial for each student to have parental support before, during, and after their courses.

Solo...

Solo is a time when students are separated from one another and the instructors in order to have solitude from the group. Instructors are never more than a brief walk away from student solo sites and they will check in on students to provide water refills, administer any medication needed, and ultimately check on the general well-being of students. Solo may last in duration from a few hours to a full 3 days depending on age and course length.

The purpose of the solo is to reflect on course and any learnings that came up, and also to have a break from the rigors of course. Students are not navigating during this time.



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Application Process

During the application process, adherence to deadlines and follow through on all responsibilities is essential. Spaces on course are first-come, first-serve. A candidate's ability to follow through on deadlines shows their commitment to being involved with Outward Bound California. As we often have more candidates than spots available, if a student is unable to meet deadlines, that spot on course may be given to another candidate.

Physical Preparation

Please begin discussions with your candidate early in their application process about how they plan to prepare physically for the course. It may be beneficial for the student if you help to create a fitness plan, and follow-up to make sure the plan is being adhered to. Showing up physically fit can make a big difference when acclimating to a novel course environment.

Mental/Emotional Preparation

An Outward Bound California course will be challenging in many ways beyond the physical demands. Individual and interpersonal challenges may arise as it can be difficult being away from the support network and working and living with the same small group of people for weeks at a time. Students may also feel challenged by being asked to push themselves past their perceived limitations or "comfort zones". Please discuss these challenges with the candidate and make sure they are prepared to approach the experience with an open mind and a willingness to embrace appropriate challenges.

Boots

Outward Bound California will provide boots and hiking socks for each student. Please ensure that your students begin wearing their boots well in advance of course start. This is necessary as it takes a significant amount of time to "break in" boots. This is the best way to prevent blisters!

Other Gear

We supply all students with standard backpacking gear like backpacks, sleeping bags and tarps. For Pinnacle students, we also supply much of the additional clothing needed in the backcountry. Your student will receive a detailed Packing List of what OBCA provides and what you and the student will need to provide.

Additional Costs

The partnering agency and/or Pinnacle Scholar are responsible for costs such as transportation fees if travel stipend is not enough to cover the cost, the above mentioned **clothing items and a medical exam, if necessary**. By applying for a Pinnacle Scholarship the partnering agency is agreeing to take on this commitment.

On-Course Expectations

All students should be participating voluntarily, and are asked to come prepared to put forth their best effort, try new activities, work as a part of a group, and follow instructions.

On Course Communication

Because our courses are conducted in remote areas, once a student leaves for their course, you will not be in direct communication with your student until they return. There may be opportunities to send letters and packages, and the address can be found on our [website](#). In instances where significant medical, behavioral, or emotional challenges arise on course, students may be brought "out of the field" by an instructor. If a student leaves the field, our goal is to assess whether the individual and other students on course are best served by the individual's return to the group. In the event that a student leaves the field for behavioral or emotional reasons,



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it may be helpful to contact someone who has a close relationship with the student and who has a good understanding of Outward Bound. In most cases, this is the primary Partner Contact. A call home may help to encourage and/or help the student to think through his or her options and behaviors.

Early Departures

Each year a small handful of students leave courses early. These cases are referred to as “early departures” and may occur for emotional, behavioral or medical reasons. Early departures impact not only the student who leaves, but also the rest of the crew, the course and our scholar program. For these reasons, it is important that all potential Pinnacle recipients are personally invested in completing their course.

In the event that a student returns home without completing their course, it is important for you to remain in contact with the student. The student needs your support as they navigate their feelings about the experience. Outward Bound California staff will make every effort to understand what led to the student’s departure from course. When early departures occur, our goals are to help students recognize the successes they had while on course, take responsibility for their own actions and learn from the experience.

Post-Course Expectations

Transportation Home

Please make sure your student has a way to get home from the course end location. Amtrak, Greyhound and shared rides are cost effective! OBCA can provide a stipend if this is necessary for your student to attend.

Transitioning Home From Course Life

Given the remote nature of Outward Bound programs, the transition home can take time. Students experience a range of emotions associated with their experiences and we rely on partner support as students translate their course experiences to their home environments.

Post Course Follow Up From OBCA

End of Course Survey - Sent to all students who attend an OBCA course to gather information about their experiences, and use feedback to improve the program. Please encourage your student to complete it. If you have feedback to share about being a Pinnacle mentor, please contact Eli Fox at efox@obca.org.

"Nothing is too far to reach.
Nothing is too hard to handle.
Nothing is ever as difficult as it
seems. When your body aches
and you want to give up, you
have to look within to find the
purpose in the fight. You have to
find who you are in the process.
Outward Bound has given me all
of this."

-Michelle B.
2010 Scholarship Student