



Rafting Operator Accreditation Overview

The Rafting Operator Accreditation (ROA) is a credential issued by the International Rafting Federation (IRF) to operators that offer rafting guided or instructional services. The purpose of the system is to provide a means of recognizing operators that meet or exceed internationally accepted safety, quality, and environmental standards. The process consists of a period of self-evaluation against published standards, a peer-review by an expert committee, and a site-visit by a trained assessor.

Who is it for?

- **Guided Services:** Companies or nonprofits that offer whitewater rafting day trips or expedition-based trips.
- **Instructional Services:** Companies, schools, programs, or nonprofits that offer whitewater rafting instruction.

What is the process?

1. **Self-Evaluation:** The operator compares itself to the ROA standards and gathers evidence that demonstrates compliance to the standards.
2. **Peer-Review:** An expert committee assesses the operation against the ROA standards.
3. **Site-Visit:** A trained assessor verifies that the operator has implemented the policies, procedures, and practices related to the standards.

What are the Prerequisites?

- There are no prerequisites for the self-evaluation stage. Any operator can apply and benefit from going through the internal audit process.
- To move to the second stage, the peer-review, applicants must have been in operation for at least 100 operator days (over a minimum of 2 years) under the current ownership or management.
- Applicants must hire all up-to-date IRF certified guides or instructors (or certified by IRF approved training programs).
- Applicants must be ready to demonstrate that they meet the ROA standards and have a commitment to the mission of the IRF.

How much does it cost?

- **Application Fee:** \$20 (includes self-evaluation materials)
- **Peer-Review Fee:** \$100-\$200 (depending on complexity of operation)
- **Site-Visit Fee:** \$500 + ROA Assessor travel expenses (assuming 2 days of assessment)
- **Annual Membership Fee:** \$100-\$400 (depending on gross annual revenue)





Rafting Operator Accreditation Key Benefits

Operators come to the IRF for accreditation because the process benefits everyone who is engaged in or involved with their organizations. The ROA process provides them with a framework to manage their resources, offer best practices, and strive for continuous improvement. This supports an operator's sustainability, encourages its growth, and helps it achieve measurable results.

The ROA process helps operators ensure they have systems in place to:

1. Prevent and respond to accidents.
2. Deliver quality services to their participants.
3. Run a socially and environmentally responsible operation.

Once fully accredited, operators enjoy the following benefits:

- Evidence that their operation has implemented internationally accepted standards.
- Enhancement of their operation's safety and quality through regular internal and external review.
- Belonging to a network of IRF accredited operators that assists consumer choices.
- Greater exposure via the IRF website and other IRF media outlets.
- Reputation boost through the use of the ROA logo in marketing and promotional materials.
- Access to resources on operator related subjects such as insurance, administration templates and processes, training, guide employment, etc.

As the ROA network gains momentum and grows in capacity, the IRF will endeavour to provide further value and financial benefits to accredited operators. Potential exists in the following categories: discounted access to insurance, supplies, trade bodies, marketing services, online services, booking softwares, etc.



Rafting Operator Accreditation Detailed Process

The ROA process is designed in stages, offering an opportunity for operators to incorporate feedback. The accreditation consists of a period of self-evaluation against published standards, a peer-review by an expert committee, and a site-visit by a trained assessor. It can be completed in 6-12 months, depending on the complexity of an operation, its location, and its time/resource commitment.

1. Initial Application:

- The operator completes and submits the *Online Application Form*.
- Once the ROA Coordinator has confirmed eligibility, an *Accreditation Agreement* is sent to the operation's primary contact to sign and return along with the *Application Fee*.
- The ROA Coordinator sends the operator the material for self-evaluation and works with them to ensure they understand the process, standards, and expectations and address any specific needs they might have.

2. Self-Evaluation Report (SER):

- The *SER* provides the operator an opportunity to look at their current policies, procedures, and practices and see how they align with the ROA standards.
- The operator collects evidence that demonstrates their implementation of the standards and, when ready, submits the completed *SER*, including the evidence, to the ROA Coordinator along with the *Peer-Review Fee*.

3. Peer-Review:

- The ROA Coordinator assigns a Peer Review Committee, composed of industry experts, to the operator.
- The Peer Review Committee reviews the operator's *SER* and assesses their operation against the ROA standards. They either approve a site-visit or offer them an opportunity to incorporate feedback.
- If a site-visit is approved, the operator gains the *Provisional Accreditation* status.

4. Site-Visit:

- Within 2 years of obtaining the *Provisional Accreditation* status, a trained ROA Assessor visits the operation to ensure that the operator has implemented the policies, procedures, and practices related to the standards. The operator is responsible for the cost of the site-visit, which includes the assessor's travel expenses and salary for 2 days.
- After the site-visit, the Peer Review Committee reviews the *Site-Visit Report* and either approves the accreditation or offers the operator an opportunity to incorporate feedback.
- If the accreditation is approved, and once the first *Annual Membership Fee* is received, the operator gains the *Full Accreditation* status.

5. Maintaining the Accreditation:

- The ROA accreditation is valid for 3 years from the date of achievement for the first period, and 5 years for the following cycles.
- Remaining accredited requires operators to maintain their compliance to the standards with an *Annual Report* and upkeep of the annual membership fee.
- At the end of the accreditation period, operators are required to complete a self-evaluation against the updated standards as well as a new site-visit, which may be done remotely.



Rafting Operator Accreditation Standards

1. Core Standards:

- 1.1. **Licensing:** The operator holds the necessary licenses to operate.
- 1.2. **Permits:** The operator has secured permission to use private lands for access or secured the appropriate permits for public lands.
- 1.3. **Adherence to national and local regulations:** The operator is able to demonstrate that they have taken steps to comply with applicable national and/or local regulations.
- 1.4. **Insurance:** The operator maintains adequate types and levels of insurance coverage.

2. Incident Prevention & Response:

2.1. Equipment:

- 2.1.1. **Boats:** The operator's boats are operationally serviceable, rigged adequately, and are suitable for the trips they offer.
- 2.1.2. **Client Equipment:**
 - 2.1.2.1. **Helmets:** The helmets they provide are operationally serviceable and are suitable for the trips they offer.
 - 2.1.2.2. **Buoyancy Aids:** The buoyancy aids they provide are operationally serviceable, correctly rated, and are suitable for the trips they offer. They are tested for their buoyancy annually.
 - 2.1.2.3. **Paddles:** The paddles they provide are operationally serviceable and suitable for the trips they offer.
 - 2.1.2.4. **Thermal and Sun Protection:** They provide adequate thermal and/or sun protection for the environment they operate in, or have ensured that clients bring suitable outfits.
 - 2.1.2.5. **Footwear:** The footwear they provide are operationally serviceable and suitable for the trips they offer, or they have ensured that clients bring suitable ones.
- 2.1.3. **Guide Equipment:** The operator's guides or instructors are equipped according to the GTE standards.
- 2.1.4. **First Aid, Emergency, & Rescue Equipment:**
 - 2.1.4.1. **Communication:** They have appropriate means of communicating for the environment they operate in, and their communication devices are in good condition.
 - 2.1.4.2. **First Aid Kit:** They have appropriate first aid kits for the environment they operate in, and they are properly stocked.
 - 2.1.4.3. **Rescue Kit:** They have appropriate rescue kits for the environment they operate in, and they are operationally serviceable.
 - 2.1.4.4. **Repair Kit:** They have appropriate repair kits for the environment they operate in, and their repair kits are in good condition.
 - 2.1.4.5. **Spares:** They carry appropriate spares for the environment they operate in, and their spares are in good condition.
- 2.1.5. **Maintenance:** They store their equipment adequately, keep it clean and dry, and hold a maintenance log.



2.2. Transportation:

- 2.2.1. **Vehicles & Trailers:** The operator's vehicles and trailers are operationally serviceable and licensed according to local regulations.
- 2.2.2. **Driver's License:** The operator's drivers have the appropriate driver's licenses to operate their vehicles and trailers.
- 2.2.3. **Maintenance:** The operator keeps maintenance records of their vehicles and trailers.

2.3. Guide/Instructor Qualifications:

- 2.3.1. **IRF Certification:** The operator's guides or instructors are currently IRF certified (or certified by IRF approved organizations).
- 2.3.2. **First Aid Certification:** The operator's guides or instructors have appropriate and current first aid certificates including CPR.
- 2.3.3. **On-Site Training:** The operator's guides or instructors are familiar with the trips they offer as well as the policies, procedures, and practices of their operation.
- 2.3.4. **Mentorship:** The operator has a system in place to assess and supervise their guides or instructors.
- 2.3.5. **Overburden:** The operator takes into account the impact of extended field time on their guides or instructors' performance.

2.4. Trip Planning:

- 2.4.1. **Trip Details:** The operator has an outline of each trip they offer that includes at a minimum the trip name/section, duration, location (start, end, and evacuation points), and difficulty.
- 2.4.2. **Risk Assessment:** The operator has conducted a risk assessment for each trip they offer, including a hazard identification, risk analysis, and mitigation strategies.
- 2.4.3. **Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines (SOP):**
 - 2.4.3.1. **Drug and Alcohol Use:** They have a policy of no intoxication from drugs and alcohol for staff and participants.
 - 2.4.3.2. **Participant Screening:** They have a system in place to ensure participants are suitable for each trip (e.g. minimum age, fitness requirements, swimming abilities, appropriate experience, etc).
 - 2.4.3.3. **Participant Information:** They collect appropriate participant information (emergency contacts and medical information) before the trips.
 - 2.4.3.4. **Staff/Participant Ratio:** They have appropriate staff/participant ratios for each trip they offer.
 - 2.4.3.5. **Staff Requirements:** They have appropriate staff requirements for each trip they offer.
 - 2.4.3.6. **Safety Craft Requirements:** They have appropriate safety craft requirements for each trip they offer.
 - 2.4.3.7. **Equipment Requirements:** They have appropriate equipment requirements for each trip they offer.
 - 2.4.3.8. **Safety Briefing & Instructions:** Their participants are adequately prepared for their role in incident prevention and response.

2.5. Incident Response:

- 2.5.1. **Incident Response Plan:** The operator has an incident response plan that addresses steps to be taken during an emergency. This plan is introduced to all staff and practiced on a regular basis.



2.5.2. **Communication Protocols:** The operator has communication protocols for their staff to know who to contact in case of an emergency.

2.5.3. **Incident Reports:** The operator has a system in place to track and analyze incidents and near misses.

2.6. **Trip Reports:** The operator has a system in place to collect and store pre and post-trip reports.

3. Participant Experience:

3.1. Communication:

3.1.1. **Pre-Booking:** The operator's trips are described accurately so that potential participants can make informed choices to participate.

3.1.2. **Pre-Trip Information:** The operator's participants are provided with adequate information about their trips prior to arrival.

3.1.3. **Risk Assumption/Waiver:** The operator's participants are informed of, acknowledge, and agree to the inherent and associated risks of the trips they participate in.

3.1.4. **Confidentiality:** The operator respects the confidentiality of participants and stores their information appropriately.

3.1.5. **Customer Feedback:** The operator has a system in place to collect, analyze, and incorporate feedback from participants.

3.2. **Facilities:** The operator's participants are provided with appropriate changing and bathroom facilities, or there is a system in place to address their needs.

3.3. **Sustenance:** The operator ensures that their participants have or are provided with appropriate food and water to sustain the physical demands of the trips they offer.

3.4. **Hygiene:** The operator takes appropriate measures to minimize the spread of bacteria or disease during their trips, particularly on overnight trips or if food is provided.

4. Social & Environmental Responsibility:

4.1. **Environmental Stewardship:** The operator follows guidelines or principles such as Leave no Trace to minimize the environmental impacts of their operation.

4.2. **Environmental Education:** The operator incorporates knowledge and awareness of the importance of river environments in their trips.

4.3. **Waste Management:** The operator prevents, manages, and disposes of waste appropriately throughout their operation.

4.4. **Cultural Awareness:** The operator designs and conducts their trips with knowledge and awareness of the context and culture in which they operate.

4.5. **Staff Retention:** The operator ensures that their guides or instructors are paid appropriately and assists them in developing in their fields.

4.6. **Equal Opportunity:** The operator offers equal and fair opportunities to staff and clients, regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, etc.