



OUTWARD BOUND  
INTERNATIONAL

# COMPASS ~ December 2025

The Newsletter of the Global  
Outward Bound Community

Image courtesy of the Outward Bound Trust UK



# Welcome ~ From OBI







# Welcome!

Dear Friends of Outward Bound,

The theme of this final issue of *Compass* for 2025 is **Character Beyond Borders**, reflecting the culmination of the Templeton-funded Global Character project. Across our global network, we have a long history of helping young people develop resilience, compassion, confidence, and a sense of responsibility to others and the natural world. The language may shift from place to place, but the commitment is constant.

Over the past three years, the Templeton-funded Global Character Project has brought this commitment into clearer focus. Through research conducted across the network and in depth with eleven Schools, we now have a deeper understanding of how Outward Bound nurtures character, and how local adaptations enrich the impact of our work.

The findings affirm what many of us have observed for years: character development is universal, yet its expression is shaped by the contexts, cultures, and communities we serve.

In this edition, we introduce the project's key insights, the theoretical framework that has emerged and practical resources and tools designed to support all Schools as they reflect on, discuss, and strengthen their practice.

Included in this issue is a schedule of more focused webinars to be rolled out in February 2026. **You will note that the links to register for each of the five webinars are included, along with a short video which provides an overview of each webinar's content. We hope that many of you will choose to join at least one of the webinars between February and April 2026.**





OB Global Ambassadors hiking in Hong Kong

As always, this issue of *Compass* also shares updates from Outward Bound International and across the network — highlighting significant anniversaries and events, collaborative initiatives, strategic projects, upcoming meetings and gatherings, and key dates to note.

**Of particular importance is the strategic planning process launched in December 2025, which will culminate in a new global strategic plan to be shared ahead of the World Conference in October 2026.**

Network consultation meetings with Executive Directors will take place in January, marking an important first step in shaping our collective direction.

We invite you to explore the stories and updates in this edition of our newsletter and to share them far and wide.

As we bring this year to a close, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to our Schools, Boards, staff, partners, researchers, and supporters across the network. Your commitment, leadership, and generosity continue to strengthen Outward Bound's impact around the world. As we look ahead to the year to come, we do so with renewed purpose, shared ambition, and confidence in what we can achieve together. We wish you all a restorative end to the year and every success as we step into 2026.

**Nick Cotton and Sarah Wiley**

Handwritten signatures of Nick Cotton and Sarah Wiley. Nick's signature is on the left, and Sarah's is on the right.



# Character Beyond Borders

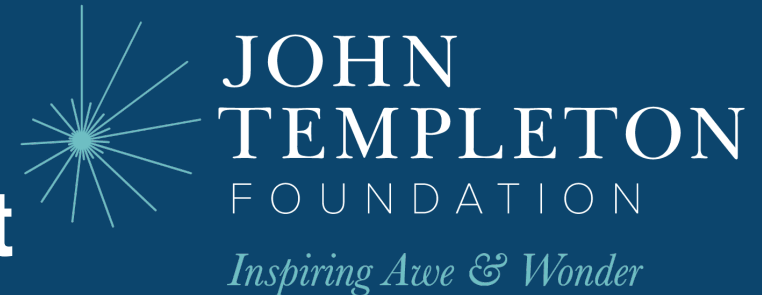
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## Introducing the Global Character Project

image courtesy of Outward Bound Trust UK



# Character Beyond Borders: Introducing the Global Character Project



In 2025, Outward Bound International completed the most comprehensive examination ever undertaken of how character is cultivated across our global network - a multi-year research initiative funded by the **John Templeton Foundation** and led in partnership with **Pete Allison - Penn State University**, **Jim Sibthorp - the University of Utah**, and **Theresa Melton - Clemson University**.

## Purpose of the the Global Character Project:

1. Understand how character development is operationalized across cultures
2. Identify program design and instructional approaches that strengthen character outcomes
3. Equip OB Schools with a practical, adaptable framework to enhance practice
4. Share insights within the outdoor learning industry and other organizations that promote character globally



The Research Team - Jim Sibthorp, Sarah Wiley, Theresa Melton, Pete Allison

**“As a global leader in outdoor education, Outward Bound is the ideal research partner for us to examine cross-cultural outdoor education and youth programs that build character.”**

**Jim Sibthorp, University of Utah**



The project offers a theoretical framework for understanding what influences character development on Outward Bound programs and how practice varies, and aligns, across contexts.



Definitions and approaches used in this study draw primarily from the work of the

### JUBILEE CENTRE FOR CHARACTER AND VIRTUE

focusing on four key domains of character that reflect Outward Bound's core outcomes:

#### PERFORMANCE

**CHARACTER** - Resilience, Self-confidence

#### MORAL CHARACTER

- Compassion for Others, Social Competence

#### CIVIC CHARACTER

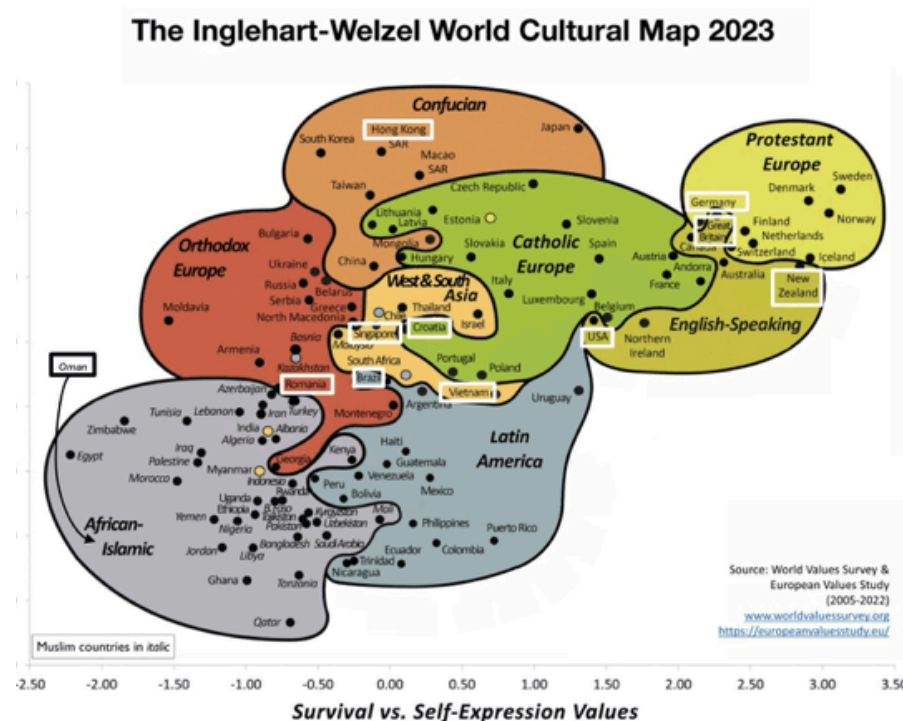
- Environmental Responsibility, Service

#### INTELLECTUAL

**CHARACTER** - Reflection, Curiosity, Creativity

## A Rich, Multi-Layered Research Approach

To understand Outward Bound across cultural contexts, researchers used a multiple-case study design grounded in the **Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map**, selecting Schools from each of the world's major cultural regions. Eleven Schools ultimately participated: **Brazil, Croatia, Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Oman, Romania, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam**



The research builds on Outward Bound's long educational tradition. From Kurt Hahn's early emphasis on compassion, perseverance, and service, to the more contemporary framing of **performance, moral, civic, and intellectual character**, our mission remains rooted in helping young people flourish.

Guided by the Outward Bound **People-Places-Process** framework, the team compared local adaptations while identifying the common elements that shape consistent educational impact.

## Data Collection:

- Global staff surveys
- Cultural alignment mapping
- Field observations
- Review of curriculum, policies, and training materials
- Interviews and focus groups with students, staff, and alumni
- Photovoice, allowing participants to capture insights through photography
- Embedded local co-researchers

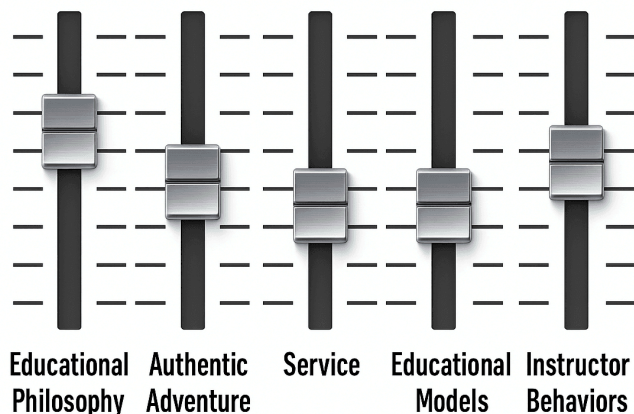


## Introducing the Five “Levers”

One of the most significant outcomes of the project is the identification of **Five Levers**: core mechanisms that Outward Bound Schools use to promote character development.

These levers form a “mixing board” that Schools adjust or “tune” based on context, participant needs, and program design.

### TUNING FOR CHARACTER



### 1. Educational Philosophy

A well-defined Educational Philosophy provides a guiding set of principles that shape every aspect of the organization’s approach to learning and development.

**When activities, models, and instructor actions align with a School’s underlying values, character outcomes are amplified.**

### 2. Authentic Adventure

Rooted in real environments with real consequences, **authentic adventure consistently emerged as a key catalyst for resilience, confidence, and personal growth.**

### 3. Service

Service is a cornerstone of fostering personal growth, social responsibility, and community engagement. **Thoughtful integration of a “service ethic” into programs can cultivate empathy, civic-mindedness, and a sense of responsibility toward others and the environment.**

### 4. Educational Models

**Educational Models serve as guides for designing teaching and learning of programs.**

Schools use a range of educational models, from the experiential learning cycle to FFART and TMF, adapting them to context, culture, and participant readiness.

### 5. Instructor Behaviours

These are the things that instructors do on course, to model values, build rapport and create culture. **Skilled instructors “tune” group culture and create learning structures that can influence meaningful character development.**



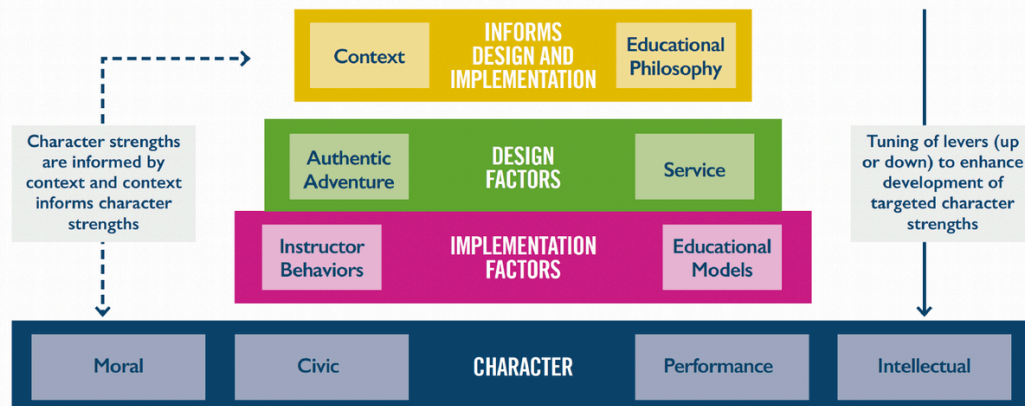
# A Theoretical Framework for a Global Network

The study generated a dynamic framework linking:

- School context
- Design and implementation influences
- The Five Levers
- Four domains of character: performance, moral, civic, and intellectual

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study produced a dynamic framework linking context, course design, and instructional practice to the four key character domains, and positioning educational philosophy and School context as the foundation for “tuning” other program levers.



The framework positions educational philosophy and School Context as foundational, shaping how each lever is tuned to develop specific character strengths.

## The Role of Context:

Each of the five levers operates within, and is influenced by, **the unique Context of the School**. Recognizing and working within Context is essential for making intentional, meaningful changes that strengthen impact.

### ASPECTS OF CONTEXT

#### SCHOOL LOCATION:

- Schools in or near natural locations allow for more accessible opportunities for authentic adventure.
- Schools in urban locations may utilize educational models and expert instruction to create impactful OB experiences with less authentic adventure characteristics.

#### TARGET CLIENT BASE:

- Many School's philosophies are informed by who they aim to serve (e.g., youth groups vs. professionals).
- Youth-focused clients may want outcomes that align with formal school curriculum or complement academic achievement, such as resilience (performance character) or curiosity (intellectual character).
- Other clients may see more value in work-oriented outcomes development (sometimes referred to as workforce development) such as teamwork, trust, communication and/or compassion.

#### FUNDING MODELS:

- Schools with industry or government support, collaborate on outcomes that are beneficial to local society, workforce, and citizenship development.
- Schools funded through a combination of grants, donations, and participants' families directly, find funding interests are more variable, and thus desired outcomes less consistent.

#### ALIGNMENT:

- Context factors above should inform and align with a School's philosophy.



# From Research to Practice:

## THE CHARACTER TOOLBOX

OBI has created a digital **Character Toolbox**, a suite of accessible, practitioner-focused resources including:

### 1. Executive Summary:

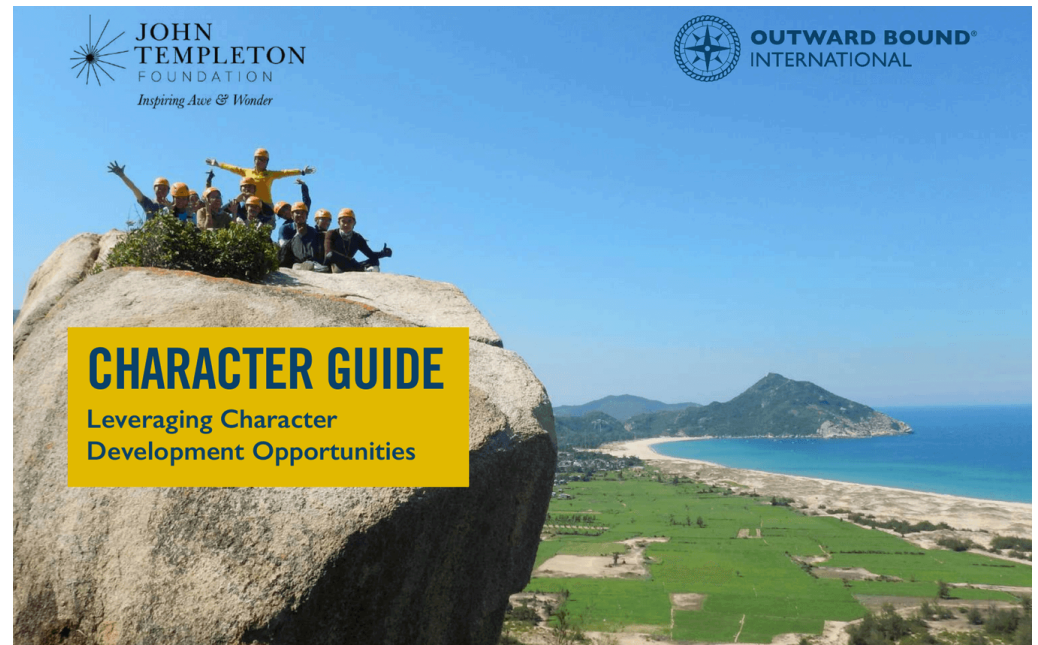
A concise overview of the Global Character Project, it distills the research into key insights that any School can quickly understand and apply.



[Click to View](#)

### 2. Character Guide:

A practical resource for School leaders and program staff. It explains the five levers, outlines the framework, and provides self-assessment tools and reflection questions to help Schools integrate the findings into strategy, program design, and staff training.



[Click to View](#)



### 3. Case Study Handbook:

A collection of short case studies from the eleven participating Schools, highlighting how different cultures and contexts shape program design and instructional choices. It illustrates the research findings in action and provides real-world examples that Schools can learn from and adapt.



[Click to View](#)

## Why this Matters for our Network:

This research affirms Outward Bound's potential to serve as “a **catalyst for character development**,” and shows that while our programs unfold in different cultures, climates, communities, and contexts, the work of developing character unites us across the global network.

The framework that has emerged from this research gives us a clearer, evidence-based way to understand *how* character is cultivated on Outward Bound programs and *why* certain approaches are so effective.

For OB Schools, this means a practical foundation to strengthen strategy, program design, instructor development, and overall educational alignment, while still respecting what makes each School's context unique. It provides a common language for discussing character, a tool for reflecting on our practice, and a way to deepen impact across

## Next Steps:

- Global Webinars focusing on the 5 Levers: Feb to May 2026
- Individual School Presentations (as requested)
- Production of External Facing Promotional Video
- World Conference 2026 - focused presentations and discussions
- Academic Presentations and Publications - ongoing throughout 2026



# Global Character Project Webinars - Register Here!

## Educational Philosophy

This webinar will provide a "deeper dive" into the role of **Educational Philosophy** in influencing character outcomes. This webinar is best for those in Outward Bound Schools who are at the leadership/management level and involved with strategy, branding/marketing, messaging, and overall positioning of your School in the marketplace and/or leading staff through discussions about Educational Philosophy.

Ideally, two to three people from your School will attend.

Feb. 11th @ 8:00am ET: [Register Here](#)

Feb. 11th @ 8:00pm ET: [Register Here](#)



Overview of Educational Philosophy Webinar

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Overview of Authentic Adventure Webinar

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## Authentic Adventure

This webinar offers a focused look at **Authentic Adventure** and its role in promoting character outcomes.

It is designed for OB staff who are responsible for program strategy, guide course design, and support staff in delivering purposeful, challenging experiences and also for field staff (frontline staff) who are responsible for program delivery.

Ideally, each School will have two to three representatives attend.

March 4th @9:00am ET: [Register Here](#)

March 4th@8:00pm ET: [Register Here](#)



## Service:

This webinar will explore practical ways to embed a **service ethic** into the fabric of an Outward Bound course, regardless of course length, terrain, or student group. We'll examine how instructors can model and reinforce a service-oriented mindset through daily routines, group responsibilities, environmental care, and acts of service among participants.

Designed for Operational Staff: program managers, course designers, course directors, and instructional "In the field" staff, the session focuses on how small, intentional practices, both on expedition and at base/centre, can foster empathy, responsibility, and compassion.

Ideally, two to three people from your School will attend.

**March 18th @ 8:00am ET: [Register Here](#)**

**March 18th @ 8:00pm ET: [Register Here](#)**



Overview of Service Webinar



Overview of Instructor Behaviors Webinar

## Instructor Behaviors:

This webinar will focus on how **Instructor Behaviors** - the everyday actions instructors take to model values, build rapport, and create a course culture - directly influence character outcomes.

Designed for Operational staff such as program managers, course designers, staff trainers, course directors, instructional staff, the session highlights how small, intentional practices can strengthen learning.

Ideally, two to three people from your School will attend.

**April 8th @ 8:00am ET: [Register Here](#)**

**April 8th @ 8:00pm ET: [Register Here](#)**

## Educational Models:

This webinar introduces how Educational Models guide the design of teaching and learning within Outward Bound programs.

Designed for Operational staff: managers, course designers, staff trainers, course directors & instructional staff - the session will focus on applying educational models with clarity and consistency, ensuring that course design and instructional practice align with your School's educational philosophy or intent.

Ideally, two to three people from your School will attend.

April 22nd @ 9:00am ET: [Register Here](#)

April 22nd @ 8:00pm ET: [Register Here](#)



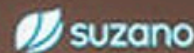
Overview of Educational Models Webinar

We invite all staff in OB Schools to explore  
**THE CHARACTER TOOLBOX,** engage with the  
upcoming webinars, and consider how the research  
insights can enrich your own programs.





OUTWARD BOUND  
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# Updates From Around the Network

image courtesy of OB Brazil



# Outward Bound Brazil Marks 25 Years of Impact and Relevance!

Outward Bound Brazil (OBB) celebrated a significant milestone this month: 25 years of transforming lives through experiential learning in nature.

Outward Bound Brazil was founded on **December 4, 2000** through the initiative of a small group of people committed to outdoor education and the transformative power of experiences in nature. Among the founders were two former students who, as teenagers, participated in Outward Bound programs in Australia and Kenya. The impact of these experiences motivated them to bring an innovative educational approach to Brazil.

The anniversary event, **held on December 4** at the Brazilian British Centre in São Paulo, brought together supporters, partners, educators and friends of the organisation for a special evening that underscored both OBB's legacy and its growing relevance in today's world.

**Since its founding in 2000, OBB has reached more than 25,000 participants across Brazil.**

“

**We create an environment where participants can test behaviours, take on leadership roles and view mistakes as part of the learning process. Leadership is not content; it is a behaviour developed through practice.**

**Andreas Martin, Executive Director of OB Brazil**



[Click to View 25th Anniversary Video](#)



As a nonprofit, OBB reinvests all surplus into expanding access for low-income youth. Its Scholarship Fund is powered by both program revenue and contributions from individuals and companies who believe deeply in the value of outdoor education.

The anniversary event reaffirmed this commitment to equity and access. **More than 120 guests joined the celebration**, which featured a special retrospective of OBB's 25-year journey and a keynote address from mountaineer [Aretha Duarte](#), the first Black Latin American woman to summit Everest and an ambassador for [Projeto Azimute](#), OBB's social initiative.

The evening blended reconnection, storytelling and inspiration, anchored in the goal of opening more doors for vulnerable youth to experience the life-changing impact of Outward Bound.





# United World Colleges & Outward Bound — A Day of Collaboration and Discovery

On November 4, 2025, [Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding \(OBCP\)](#) and [Outward Bound Central China \(OBCC\)](#) worked together to design and deliver a one-day experiential program in Suzhou for the United World Colleges (UWC) Heads Group meeting. Around twenty Heads of School and senior leaders from UWC schools joined the day.

## UNITED WORLD COLLEGES (UWC) - [CLICK FOR MORE INFO](#)

is a global network of schools dedicated to bringing young people from around the world together to learn, live, and lead with purpose. Inspired by Kurt Hahn, UWC places **PEACE EDUCATION**, cross-cultural understanding, and service at its core.

Students from diverse backgrounds come together in residential settings to build skills, empathy, and a commitment to making a positive difference.



## United World Colleges Heads Group Event

Organized by

Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding  
& Outward Bound Central China

[Click to View Video](#)





The morning began outdoors, under the trees and near the lakeshore, where OBCC led a light-hearted “Amazing Race” through a local park. Teams took on short challenges from low ropes and creative paper-cutting to quiz puzzles, all mapped out on a route specially designed by the OBCC team. It was lively, full of laughter, and a great way to connect.

In the afternoon, OBCC guided reflective conversations and debates around educational leadership, making peacebuilding a hands-on skill and the UWC mission. The day came to a close with a symbolic and collaborative activity: building traditional mortise-and-tenon (榫卯) wooden structures — a Suzhou craft representing how strong communities are built through connection and care.

**This joint program reminded everyone of the shared roots between UWC and Outward Bound in Kurt Hahn’s philosophy, and showed how experiential learning can continue to bring educators together to reflect, reimagine, and renew their purpose.**



# The Reset:

## A National Day to Log Off and Reconnect

Hosted by Outward Bound USA -  
January 24, 2026

This January, Outward Bound USA will launch

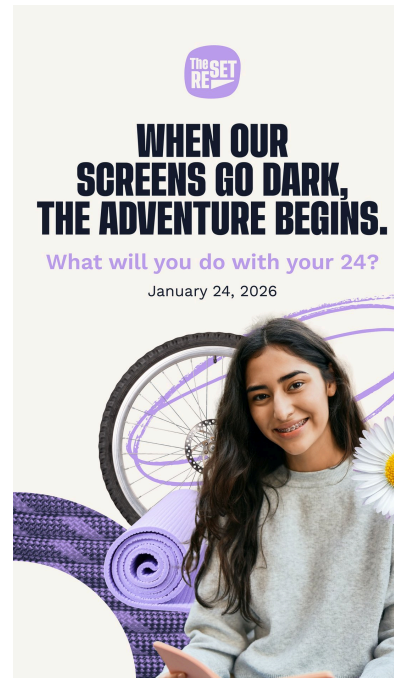
**THE RESET** a national movement inviting young people, families, educators, and communities to step away from screens and reconnect with themselves, one another, and the natural world.

As concerns about youth mental health, digital fatigue, and attention overload continue to grow, *The Reset* offers a hopeful and practical response: **one intentional day to log off, get outside, and be fully present.**

The campaign culminates on **The Reset Day — Saturday, January 24, 2026** — when participants across the U.S. will turn off their devices and reclaim clarity, creativity, and connection.



## OUTWARD BOUND USA



“

*Unplugging is not about what you're giving up — it's about what you're getting back.”*

— Ginger Naylor, CEO, Outward Bound USA

### Why The Reset Matters

Digital immersion is now the norm — and the impacts are mounting:

- 95% of U.S. adolescents (ages 10–15) spend more than two hours per day on recreational screens (Center for Disease Control).
- Higher screen use is linked to **increased anxiety, depression, and lower psychological wellbeing.**
- While 72% of U.S. teens report joy online, nearly half feel overwhelmed — and 38% say **they feel addicted** (Pew Research Center, 2024).

Globally, Outward Bound brings decades of experience creating meaningful, device-free learning environments.

**In 2024 alone, Outward Bound USA programs generated nearly 1.5 million hours of screen-free time.**



## A Choice-Based, Youth-Centered Approach

Unlike traditional screen-time restrictions, **The Reset** is choice-driven and empowering. Participants define what a meaningful break looks like for them, whether that's:

- A walk or hike in nature
- An unplugged family activity
- Outdoor play or creative expression
- A classroom reflection circle
- Quiet, solo time offline

By placing agency in the hands of young people, **The Reset** encourages ownership over time, attention, and wellbeing.

RESET  
TOOLKIT -  
CLICK  
HERE!

While The Reset is led by **Outward Bound USA**, it reflects values and practices shared across the global network.

## Nature as a Reset Button

“*Time in nature isn't just restorative — it's transformative.*”

— Catherine Price, Author and Host Committee member

Outward Bound instructors know this intuitively: **time outside shifts perspective, restores focus, and creates space for reflection.** **The Reset** draws on this same understanding by offering a simple, accessible entry point for communities to experience the power of presence and place.

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## Why This Matters for the Global OB Network...

- Learning through direct experience
- Intentional **disconnection** to foster deeper connection
- Nature as a powerful teacher
- Young people taking ownership of their growth

## A Broad Coalition, Grounded in OB Values

The Reset is guided by a **Host Committee** of educators, psychologists, artists, athletes, and advocates, and supported by a wide coalition of youth-serving, mental health, digital wellness, and outdoor organizations.

National partners including **Outside**, **SMBC Global Foundation**, and **Ford Bronco Wild Fund**, are helping extend the reach of Outward Bound's message **by bringing credibility, visibility, and momentum to a movement rooted in our shared work.**

It also open doors, sparking conversations with foundations, partners, and communities interested in **wellbeing, youth mental health, and nature-based learning.**

# Leadership Update

## Introducing – Andrew Hill, Executive Director, Outward Bound Oman

For the last 28 years of my career, I have been in Experiential Learning, using outdoor education as a medium in many areas of the world, including the Arctic Circle, Australia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

During these 28 years, I have worked for local councils, NGOs, youth services, high schools, and, more recently, my own companies operating in the UK and Thailand.

The Thai company served my passion for sea kayaking. I have coached, guided, and led Sea kayaking sessions/expeditions in many parts of the world. Sea kayaking has always provided me with the peacefulness, tranquillity, solitude, exhilaration, companionship and wonderment, to 'sharpen my saw', Steven Covey, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

My involvement with Outward Bound started in 2018 when I became an associate trainer at Outward Bound Eskdale (UK), delivering the Outward Bound philosophy directly to participants. My journey with OB continued at OB Hong Kong as Head of Operations, where I focused on developing staff and programmes to meet the post-COVID needs of Hong Kong communities.

Whilst at OB Hong Kong, I was fortunate enough to be invited to OB Oman in October 2024, to advise them on the development of their Sea kayaking program. Now, 12 months later, I find myself at OB Oman again as their Executive Director!



**I feel privileged and honoured to be the ED of OB Oman, and I am very much looking forward to the challenges and opportunities the future presents.**



## OB Croatia: Celebrating 20 years!



Outward Bound Croatia celebrated their 20th anniversary this year. Check out the heartwarming video above which showcases their celebration in October - highlighting the best of Community, Collaboration, and Connection.

## OB Peacebuilding Opportunity:

### 2026 EXPERIENTIAL PEACEBUILDING FELLOWSHIP

Work with us in 2026 - this annual fellowship is for emerging leaders, educators and outdoor instructors who seek to integrate experiential learning, community leadership, and peacebuilding practices in their work.

We focus on initiatives and activities that emphasize compassion, curiosity and inter-personal connection.

Each fellowship is based on 10 working days spread over 12 months. Help us plan, deliver and evaluate OBCP's training programs and workshops.

[outwardboundpeace.org](https://outwardboundpeace.org)



[Click for More Information](#)



# Strategic Projects Update

image courtesy of the Philadelphia Outward Bound School, OB USA





# The OBI Emerging Leaders Program



OBI's Emerging Leaders Program, offered in conjunction with **Penn State University**, has reached its halfway mark. Early signs point to something the network has been asking for: **a practical, grounded pathway for developing the next generation of Outward Bound leaders.**

Designed for experienced staff stepping into broader organisational roles, the six-month online program focuses on the core work that keeps our Schools functioning well, program quality, people leadership, business management and operations, with everything taught through a network-wide lens. **The intention is simple: help future leaders understand how OB operates across the world, then apply that insight back home.**

The current cohort includes participants from a wide spread of Schools across the network: **OB Australia, OB Brasil, OB Central China, OB Germany, OB Hong Kong, OB India - Himalaya, OBKSA, OBM, OB New Zealand, OB Oman, OB Costa Rica and OB Philadelphia (USA).** That diversity is shaping the course in all the right ways. Discussions routinely jump between different ways of operating, cultural contexts, and challenges, giving students a clearer sense of what is shared across the network and what is unique to their own School.

## Looking Ahead:

**Applications for the next cohort will open in March 2026 with the program running from September to February 2027. Exact dates will be confirmed early in the new year.**

**Anyone interested, for themselves or someone in their School, get in touch with**

**MANU SCHIJF**

**to be added to the mailing list for early updates.**

The curriculum is built around four modules: **OB Programming and Leadership, People Management, Financial and Business Management, and Applied Management.** Each module blends readings, videos, forums, and short applied tasks that connect directly to participants' real work.

Each participant is also supported by a mentor from their own School. These monthly check-ins are proving to be a key part of the learning process.

Although the cohort is only halfway through, the feedback has been very positive.

# OBI Board Meetings hosted by OB South Africa

In October, Outward Bound International's Board and Committee members met in the beautiful Garden Route region of South Africa for three days of focused discussions and connection. Outward Bound South Africa, led by Executive Director Deon Snyders, hosted the meetings and provided excellent support throughout.

This meeting was especially timely as OBI begins a new strategic planning phase under the leadership of new Executive Director Nick Cotton, and continues to strengthen how we support the 37 Schools across our global network. The AGM included a few important updates. We confirmed the new Board members and announced that long-time member Hilal Al Mawali will serve as Vice Chair alongside Chair Colin Maund.

A key milestone was the official awarding of the full Outward Bound license to Outward Bound Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (OB KSA). Dr. Ahmed Barabbaa accepted the license on behalf of the School. This achievement reflects the steady effort of the OB KSA Board, staff team, and early champions including Iain Peter, Dr. Barabbaa, Deon Snyders, and Hilal Al Mawali.

**Thank you to everyone who contributed to a productive and positive set of meetings. The time in South Africa helped strengthen our shared direction for the year ahead.**









# Welcome to our new OBI Board Members!

The OBI Board of Directors helps guide the big-picture direction of OBI, working alongside OBI's leadership team to move our shared goals forward. The Board plays an important role in keeping our vision, mission and values at the centre of everything we do, and in safeguarding the reputation of the Outward Bound brand around the world. Its members come from across our global network and bring a wide range of experience, perspectives and stories, reflecting both our geographic diversity and the spirit that connects all Outward Bound Schools

In 2025, OBI is pleased to welcome the following new Board members: Paola Vita (USA), Firas Al-Abduwani (Oman), Scott Taylor (USA), & Mark Baker (UK).

## Welcome & Thank You for your Service!

[CLICK HERE TO SEE A LIST OF THE CURRENT OUTWARD BOUND INTERNATIONAL BOARD](#)



Firas Al-Abduwani



Scott Taylor



Paola Vita



Mark Baker



# OBI STRATEGIC PLANNING

At the end of 2025, the current Strategic Plan will 'expire' which means we are making plans to develop a new plan that guides development of OB International, and therefore the network, over the next 3 years.

This is an exciting opportunity for us to ensure we are optimising the potential of our network and ensure that we provide the support that enables our stakeholders

## TIMELINE

The World Conference in Singapore in October 2026 is the perfect platform for us to spend time together to launch the new plan and for stakeholders to understand our work priorities. Therefore we will need to have the plan ready for Singapore!



2022 - 2024 Strategic Plan

Development of the Plan will be in 3 phases:

**Phase 1: Network Consultation (Dec 2025 - Feb 2026)**

**THE ONLINE SURVEY** provides an opportunity for the

OB network and stakeholders to reflect on the work that OBI does, what is most valued, and what is priority. This survey will be followed in January 2026 with online calls which will look at the survey results and allow for more in-depth discussion and sharing. **These calls are primarily aimed at Executive Directors because they interact on a regular basis with Outward Bound International.**

**The dates for these calls are Wednesday 28th January 2026.**

0800 GMT / 1600 Singapore & Hong Kong / 1330 Delhi

[MEETING LINK](#)

1100 GMT / 1500 Muscat / 1300 Helsinki / 1200 CET

[MEETING LINK](#)

1700 GMT / 1400 Rio de Janeiro / 1200 New York [MEETING LINK](#)

## Phase 2: OBI Board & OPScom facilitated workshops (Mar & Apr 2026)

At the next Board meeting in **March 2026** to be held in Croatia, the OBI Board and Operations Committee will complete a facilitated strategy session.

The outcomes of Phase 1 will provide the context so that by the end of these meetings we will have some

## Phase 3: Draft & Finalisation (May - Sept 2026)

The outcomes of Phase 2 will be drafted into a plan that will be distributed to network Schools for comment. This will then be finalised for production and presentation at the **World Conference in October 2026**.

**Questions? Comments? Contact**  
**Nick Cotton or Sarah Wiley**

**WE WANT YOUR  
OPINION: FILL  
OUT THE OBI  
STRATEGIC  
PLANNING  
REVIEW SURVEY,  
CLICK HERE!**



Interactive poll not supported  
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# OBI Risk Management Update - Manu Schijf

reviewers joining the rotation.

We've also made real progress in how we collect and use review data. The system now provides clear, comparable insights into what's happening across the network. One clear example: Schools with strong safety-related governance consistently perform better on safety in the field. That may feel intuitive, but being able to demonstrate it with evidence, rather than assumption, is a meaningful step forward. This is helping us better understand where Schools need support and how we can be more effective.

Risk Manager calls have continued throughout the year, including sessions on reputational risk, a joint ED and Risk Manager call with a focus on cyber security, and a final session on insights from the 2025 reviews. These calls continue to strengthen connections across the network. Three calls are planned for 2026, starting in February, with a continued focus on applying review insights and sharing lessons. Details will come through via teams, email, and this newsletter.

**See Below for links to the February 2026 calls:**

**February 19, 1pm NZ time** ([link for event timezone info](#)):

**February 19th 8pm NZ time** ([link for event timezone info](#)):



Manu Schijf

## OBI Risk Managers Team

We have created a Teams platform for risk managers across the network, and people involved with risk management committees. It is intended to be a platform for dialogue, peer networking and engagement, and resources. To register for this OBI Risk Managers team, [complete the signup link](#).

## OBI Risk Management Guidance Documents

The newly updated *Outward Bound International Risk Management Guidance* reflects current effective practices and evolving needs across our global network. **This revised edition includes a series of new appendices that address emerging and specialized topics—from near-miss criteria and incident reporting to new program planning.**

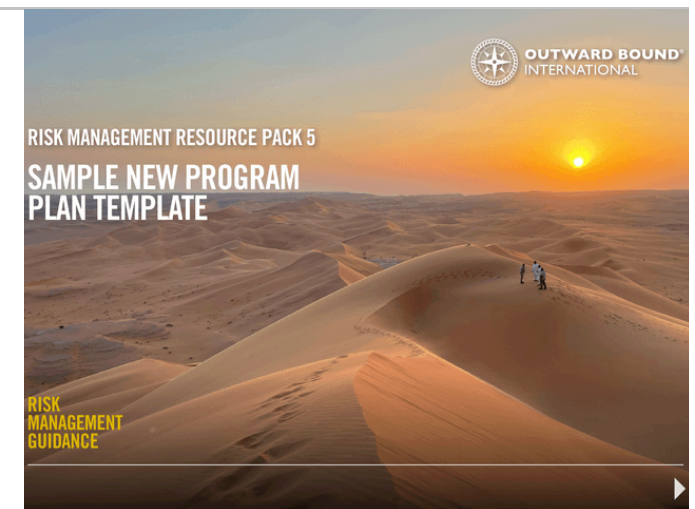
Designed as a practical resource for School leaders and risk managers, this guidance supports consistent, high-quality standards across all Outward Bound programs. We encourage all Schools to review the Guidance documents and integrate relevant sections into their operational practices.



[Click to View Guidance Documents](#)

**All of the OBI Risk Management Guidance Documents can be found on the OBI Resource Centre:**

[OBI RESOURCE CENTRE](#)





# Recent Risk Management Reviews



OB India - Bharat



OB Oman



OB Hong Kong





OB Belgium



OB Hong Kong



OB Hong Kong



OB Oman



# Thank You Sara Morrison - OBI's Social Guru!



For the past five years, Sara Morrison has been the steady hand behind OBI's social media posting. Sara has recently been hired to be the Director of Major Gifts, East Coast for the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and unfortunately will be leaving OBI.

As a former North Carolina OB School staffer, Sara brought a keen sense for what resonates across our diverse global community, a thoughtful approach to presenting each School's content, and a steady hand in curating our shared voice.

Sara helped bring the spirit of Outward Bound to life on every platform and her work helped strengthen our global identity, amplify the voices of our Schools, and showcase the impact of Outward Bound.

## Did You Know...

In 2019, OBI had no social media presence. Now, in 2025, we have over 5500 followers on LinkedIn. This is our most popular social platform. We have 2000+ followers on Instagram and 1000+ followers on Facebook.

## What is your School's most popular social media platform?



Interactive poll not supported  
[View online version](#)

# The Outward Bound International Resource Centre

The Outward Bound International Resource Centre was launched in 2023. This is where we store and share resources – a “go to” place for OBI documents and support materials.

The Resource Centre also has information and links to upcoming meetings and events.

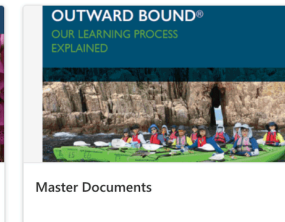
The Resource Centre is accessible to everybody who receives the Compass Newsletter to their email address once they have authenticated their email address.

If you are reading this newsletter, than you should have received an email directly from Microsoft inviting you to authenticate the email account you use to receive the Compass Newsletter. Once you have completed this process, you will be able to access the Resource Centre via the following link:

**[Resource Centre – Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)**

Please get in touch with **[Sarah Wiley](#)** at OBI

If you have any questions or difficulties connecting.





# Outward Bound World Conference 2026!

The World Conference is coming in 2026. Hosted by OB Singapore, it is a chance for School Executive Directors, Board Members and Senior Staff to come together to Connect, Collaborate and Celebrate our global community.

More information about Conference registration will be coming in the New Year. For now, make sure the dates are in your calendar.



## Outward Bound World Conference 2026

in Singapore  
12-14 October 2026

# Save the Dates!

## 1. Regional ED Meetings (TEAMS):

**Europe/Africa/Middle East Region:** Next meeting is Wednesday April 1st at 1:00pm UK time. Please contact [Martin Davidson](#) for more information.

**Asia Pacific Region:** Second Thursday every 2nd month from 7:30am to 8:30am Indian Standard Time (IST). The next meeting is Thursday Feb. 12th. Please contact [Salil Kumar](#) for more information.

**Americas Region:** Every 3 months, on the first Wednesday of the month at 11am ET. Next meeting is Wednesday Feb. 4th. Please contact [Andreas Martin](#) for more information.

## 2. OBI Marketing & Communications Presentation (TEAMS):

**Developing & Implementing a Strategic Marketing Plan,** presented by Pakki Chan, Marketing Manager at OB Hong Kong.

For Marketing and Communications staff at OB Schools

Wednesday January 14th @ 3:00 pm GMT (UK time): [Meeting Link](#)

## 3. OBI Fundraising Networking Group Presentation (TEAMS):

**Building Your School's Fundraising Capacity - OB Brazil's Journey,** presented by Andreas Martin, ED of OB Brazil

For Fundraising & Development staff at OB Schools

Wednesday January 21st @ 8:00am ET (NYC/Toronto time): [Meeting Link](#)

OR

Wednesday January 21st @8:00pm ET (NYC/Toronto time): [Meeting Link](#)



# Next Issue of Compass:

- May 2026
- Theme: "Our Global Impact"

This edition of *Compass* highlights the network's global impact, drawing on data from the Outward Bound Outcomes Survey (2020 - 2025) and insights from recent global research on the "mechanisms" that drive student outcomes on OB courses.

In addition, we will include our usual updates from the network and on OBI's strategic projects.

- Contributions (photos, articles, videos, reports) to Sarah Wiley by Thursday May 1st, 2026.



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Outward Bound Hong Kong

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Outward Bound colleagues

## Contact Us:

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