As many are now familiar, the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) has been creating design, performance, inspection and operations standards for the challenge course industry stretching way back to the 1990s with the introduction of the 1st set of ACCT Standards or “The Brown Book”.

Over the years, the ACCT Standards has evolved into one of the more comprehensive standards available to the industry. In 2006, after a lengthy process, ACCT was awarded the status of being an accredited standards developer by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Our standards are created through a number of steps through the ANSI Standards process, one of which includes you.
As a part of our accreditation, ACCT was required to develop a set of procedures which would govern the process of review and adoption of any proposed American National Standard that the Association created. These Accredited Procedures outline ACCT’s process assuring that any proposed standard submitted to ANSI for final approval meets requirements set forth by ANSI.

Underlying all procedures accredited by ANSI are 5 cardinal principles that govern the consensus process:

- Openness – All materially affected parties may participate in standards development. (That’s you!)
- Transparency – Records, process open and publicly available (no secret meetings).
- Consensus – Decisions by more than a simple majority (not unanimity). Seeks to take into account views of all parties concerned, and to reconcile conflicting arguments.
- Balance – No dominance of standard group by one segment.
- Due process – Written documented procedures including an appeals process.

The Standards Development process within ACCT has been developed over many years and is continuously evolving with the intent to provide the best expertise from all facets of our industry along with direct input from the public and those materially affected by the standards. The current process involves a series of research and writing committees. These committees include the Design, Performance, and Inspection Writing Committee, and the Operations and Training Standards Writing Committee. These committees focus on specific areas of the industry, under the direction of the Standards Development Committee. Members of these committees may have very specific expertise in very focused areas of the industry and are typically involved in researching and developing specific draft standard language for consideration. These committees are supported and managed by ACCT under guidelines created by the association specifically for this task.

The Consensus Groups function is specifically governed by the accredited procedures. The group is typically comprised of 12 to 15 people. Members of the Consensus Group are assigned into one of three different categories: vendor, user, or general interest.

Membership in the Consensus Group gives consideration to:
- a) The need for active participation by members of each interest group.
- b) The need for balance and the potential for dominance by members of a single interest group.
- c) The extent of interest expressed and the willingness to participate.
- d) Qualifications and ability to materially contribute to the work of the Consensus Group.
Once Draft Standards are submitted to the Consensus Group they are then required to follow a formal and open process where members provide input and/or revision followed by acceptance and balloting to be released for public comment. Of all of the steps in standards development the Public Comment Period is the most important and substantial step, especially to those in the industry that are governed by the ACCT Standards. This Public Comment Period is the specific time and place whereby anyone who is materially affected by the standards, gets to engage directly with the Consensus Group and Standard Development Committee Members to add their comments and input to directly affect a proposed standard. As stated above, ANSI requires that any and all comments be considered and all attempts made to reconcile conflicting arguments regarding proposed standards language.

The proposed standards go for a final vote before being submitted to ANSI as a Proposed American National Standard once the comment periods are completed and all views and or objections are considered or resolved. Once reviewed and accepted by ANSI they can then be published as an American National Standard.

It is easy to look at our memberships and see all the discounts received once a membership is established. Once you dig deeper, you can see that ACCT, one of the leading standard writing associations for our industry, is here to ensure that the ACCT Standards represent you and the industry you work in day in and day out. On Feb 6th and 7th, 2019, the committee members from each portion of this process will be a part of a series of pre-conference sessions that focus on de-mystifying the standards as a part of the 29th Annual International ACCT Conference and Expo.

For a more in-depth look into the process Click Here