

Cybersecurity at The White House

by Steve Smith—Interim A4L Leadership

The past three months since the last A4L Quarterly Newsletter has been very busy and rewarding...

In August I had the honor of representing A4L/SDPC at the White House Back to School Safely: Cybersecurity for K-12 Schools event. The event took place in the East Room and the recording can be found [here](#).



As an honored guest of First Lady Jill Biden, I was invited due to the impact of the SDPC in addressing both privacy and security as implemented by EdTech vendors. In coordination with this event the [US DOE Office of Educational Technology](#) in partnership with the [Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency \(CISA\)](#) released a set of “[K-12 Digital Infrastructure Briefs](#)”. These briefs are intended to resources and guides for districts across the coun-

try to better position themselves against by cybersecurity threats as well as to address student privacy risks.

The brief entitled “[K-12 Digital Infrastructure Brief](#); [Privacy Enhancing Interoperable and Useful](#)” specifically highlights the SDPC as a resource for districts across the country. In addition, SDPC Management Board / North American Leadership group member Josh Olstad is highlighted for his work to establish the NH SDPC Alliance.

We should all pause for a moment and take time to recognize and acknowledge the huge impact the SDPC has had on the K-12 education ecosystem. We should all be VERY proud of the work we have accomplished together.

I look forward to continuing this great work to realize our dream and mission; “To develop a “Learner Centric Model for Data Management” to provide learners and practitioners the flexibility to choose student administration and learning tools that work seamlessly while ensuring data integrity, security and privacy”

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Global Community News

The World We Find Ourselves in...

by Alex Jackl, Founder & CEO, Bardic Systems; Interim Tech Lead, A4L Community; and Data Standards United Advocate

The World We Find Ourselves In

The world is changing all around us. More and more States and Provinces and the Federal Departments of Education - particularly the US Department of Education - are focused on P20W+ (pre-school through workforce) data collection and reporting systems. This is matched by a very strong trend for analytical systems to be associated with these systems so these entities can make smart decisions about learners based on data, information and derived insight.

These trends are combined with the trend towards breaking up the horizontal and vertical segmentation that have traditionally been separated by organisational, financial, historical, legislative, and regulatory barriers. Pre-Kindergarten lived in their own world, and K-12th grade was separated by a hard line from the Post-Secondary world of Community Colleges and Universities, and then separated by a vast gulf from the Military, Workforce training, Apprenticeships, Employers, and Adult Continuing Education or Reskilling.

Over time there are growing needs and expectations of students, educators and employers to have learner and learning data follow students through the learner lifecycles as they move through all these spaces all the way to retirement and beyond.

How Do We Fit Into This New World?

Standards bodies - which have been traditionally isolated by the same barriers as these segments - should evolve as well! Standards bodies and technologists that work with them should also adapt to the changing needs and provide a unified approach for people to reduce double work and confusion in the space and to save agencies effort, resources and avoid confusion.

In addition, addressing privacy concerns is no longer optional at any phase of the learner lifecycle and efforts to ensure privacy should be streamlined PK20W+.

We have a diverse community of standards that serve Privacy, K-12, Postsecondary, Workforce, Human Resources, Common Vocabulary, Healthcare, Government. We are all non-profit institutions or agencies designed to forward the common good - why do we act like competing vendors?

Whatever market forces and organisational history got us here, I believe standards bodies have an

obligation to be looking forward to addressing the needs of the education ecosystem and not focus on our individual interests. Technology has evolved to allow for the collection and securing of previously segmented data into one long learner lifecycle journey - and so should the standards bodies.

A Unique Opportunity

We are at a unique opportunity - a convergence of activity that will allow us to possibly serve the PK20W+ ecosystem in a more powerful, effective and more pervasive way. I am looking forward to the combined PESC and A4L [pK20W+ Privacy & Interoperability Summit](#) on November 7-9 as an opportunity to forge some of that thinking and put us on the path to building new structures and relationships that will serve the new world we find ourselves in!



Welcome new members!



Closegap



Curriculum Advantage



Goosechase Adventures



Mountain Brook Schools, AL



MyCareerTech

Check those email addresses!

We ask that those of you who remember when the Access 4 Learning Community was known by a different name, to please check the email addresses you are using to communicate with us.

We are winding down our usage of sifassociation.org from September

2023, so please make sure that if you are emailing Penny, Lisa, Steve, or John that the address ends in A4L.org.

Please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director, if you have any questions.



Scheduled Maintenance reminder

Our regular maintenance schedule is timetabled for the last Friday of each month.

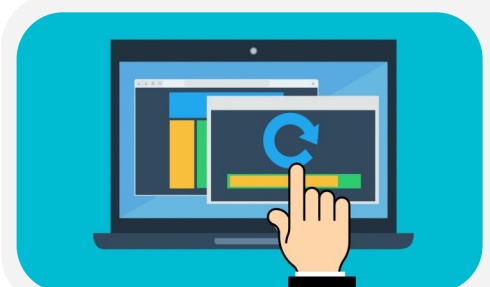
Please be aware of the following scheduled maintenance that will be taking place over the coming weeks:

SDPC Resource Registry, SIF Test Harness and operational databases:

Maintenance will take place from 8pm ET on Friday, September 29 until COB on Sunday, October 1, 2023.

You may experience outages of these services during this time.

We are sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause and advise you to plan your work accordingly.



Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

A4L.org | data.A4L.org | privacy.A4L.org

Weekly Live Office Hour

by Penny Murray, Community Director

We are delighted to announce that we will be holding a weekly 'Office Hour' for our Community Members, starting on **October 3, 2023**.

Office Hour: 12noon ET, Tuesdays

This is an opportunity for Community members to drop-in and ask questions, share ideas and discuss any issues they may be facing.

John Lovell, Technology Director and Penny Murray, Community Director will be available to answer your questions and provide guidance.

PLEASE NOTE: Should you have any issues or enhancement suggestions relating to the SDPC Resource Registry, we advise you to submit them as a [support ticket](#) as we will not be able to resolve these during the Office Hour.

Weekly, Tuesdays at 12noon (US Eastern)

Live Office Hour

John Lovell
Technology Director

Penny Murray
Community Director

<https://www.A4L.org/group/office-hours>

ADVANCE NOTICE: Bylaws for Community Review

As we continue working hard behind the scenes, work is ongoing to revise the A4L Community Governance Structure, and with this, revisions are being made to the Association Bylaws.

Once the revisions have been approved by the Association Board of Directors, they will then be put into a Community Review for a couple of weeks. All Community members will be invited to provide feedback on the Bylaws. This feedback will then be reviewed by the Policy & Procedures Committee, with possible further edits to the Bylaws before they are presented back to the Association Board of

Directors for approval and publication.

Whilst not wishing to delay this process, the Community members involved are taking the necessary time to ensure the best draft is put out to Community Review.

An email notification will be sent out to all Community Members when the Bylaws are available for review, and we encourage everyone to review and provide feedback where necessary.

Any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Community Director, [Penny Murray](#).

YOUR Community Needs YOU!

As a membership organization, there are two key components to our survival ...

- the **income** generated by membership dues (our only source of funding) which enable us to develop our Specifications, enhance the SDPC Resource Registry, and provide additional tools and resources for our members

PLUS, and most important...

- our league of **volunteers!** Without member engagement and participation in our locale & global Project Teams, Management Boards and Technical Boards we would not function.

So, as we enter this new phase, please assess your participation and consider joining one of the many Project Teams **that need YOU!** Further details of current group activities can be found on [page 5](#).

If you are not sure where to get 'plugged in', feel free to drop our Community Director, [Penny Murray](#) an email—we'd be happy to help!



Community Project Team Updates

GLOBAL

Association Board of Directors: The newly convened Association Board of Directors recently met to continue the discussions around revisions to the Association Bylaws and strategic direction of the Community.

International Technical Board (ITB): The ITB has had a greater eye towards technical cohesion since the release of SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.6 and is encouraged by the signs of increased co-operation across the global A4L Community.

Infrastructure: The Infrastructure Team has been encouraged by increasing industry support of the Matrix Parameters that we use in our specifications and is considering including definitions for them in our next release of our OpenAPI documentation.

Data Model, Mapping & Migration (D3M): The D3M is currently working on the proof-of-concept stage for using artificial intelligence to generate examples of our data objects for documentation and testing.

A4L Data Privacy: The Data Privacy Team is happy to announce that the POD pilot projects have now been incorporated into our work and that George Gatsis is our new Lead.

Open Source Developers Network (OSDN): The OSDN is gearing up to help North America incorporate the quality improvements that have already been made to the newest releases of the global SIF Infrastructure and integrated into the current AU Data Model work.

AUSTRALIA

AU Management Board (AUMB/

SIFAAMB): The AU Management Board are discussing updates on AU activities.

AU Technical Board (AUTB/DSWG): The AU Technical Board recently met to approve the next release of the SIF Data Model Implementation Specification (AU).

NORTH AMERICA

North American (NA) Management Board (NAMB): The current focus for the NA Board is on strategic direction setting for the continued development of the SDPC Resource Registry and SIF Specifications. They have agreed to hold joint calls with the SDPC Management Board for the remainder of the year.

North American (NA) Technical Board (NATB): The NATB has graciously agreed to pilot artificial intelligence generate data examples with their upcoming release of SIF Unity. Now all eyes are on the D3M's deep dive into AI.

Unity Adoption: The Unity Adoption Team has wrapped up their authoring of Modern Grade Pass Back see the Sneak Peek on [page 6](#) for more information.

CEDS Alignment: A4L's CEDS Team took the summer off and is currently looking for needs from the State Requests Team to necessitate further work, most likely steaming from expected updates to ED Facts reporting. However, if you have a CEDS alignment need please contact [John Lovell](#), Technology Director.

State Requests: The State Requests team isn't letting a longer specification development process slow them down. They have been actively look-

ing at outstanding GitHub tickets and are gearing up to work on the SIF Unity release after the one being drafted.

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY CONSORTIUM

SDPC Management Board (SDPCMB): The group have agreed to hold joint calls with the NA Management Board for the remainder of the year.

SDPC Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee): The NDPA v2 Sub-Committee continues to meet weekly to review the NDPA v2 feedback submitted during Community Review. For more information, please see [page 9](#).

SDPC Alliance Leadership: The Alliance Leadership group continues to meet bi-weekly to discuss any issues and questions that arise for Alliance Admins.

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team: See [page 9](#) for update.

NDPA Policy, Procedures & Usage (PPU): The NDPA PPU group is currently on hold while changes/revisions are proposed for the NDPA v2.

Legislative Activity & Research Data Sharing Agreement: These groups are currently placed on 'pause'.

Resource Registry Roadmap (R3): This group continues to review SDPC Resource Registry performance enhancement suggestions and plan the development pipeline for the Registry.

SDPC Vendor: Group members have submitted their proposed changes for the NDPA v2 and are back on their quarterly meeting schedule.

News from the North American Community

Sneak Peek: Modern Grade Pass Back

In previous releases of the SIF Specification, the A4L Community added support for fully asynchronous requests to the SIF Infrastructure Specification (global) and added new elements to the SIF Data Model Specification (North America) - also known as Unity— in large part to make Grade Pass Back verifiable and richer. However, there was a major complication, many of the requests for improvements originated before the pandemic which indirectly resulted in most of the people invested and ready to launch into pilots and products moving on to other positions, often with different organizations. So, the few of us still kicking around the Community made it our mission to first capture the intended designs then summarize them for you. While the content is complete, the document is still taking its final form and proper fanfare is being arranged. What follows is an excerpt which highlights the benefits for those that might want to offer better solutions.

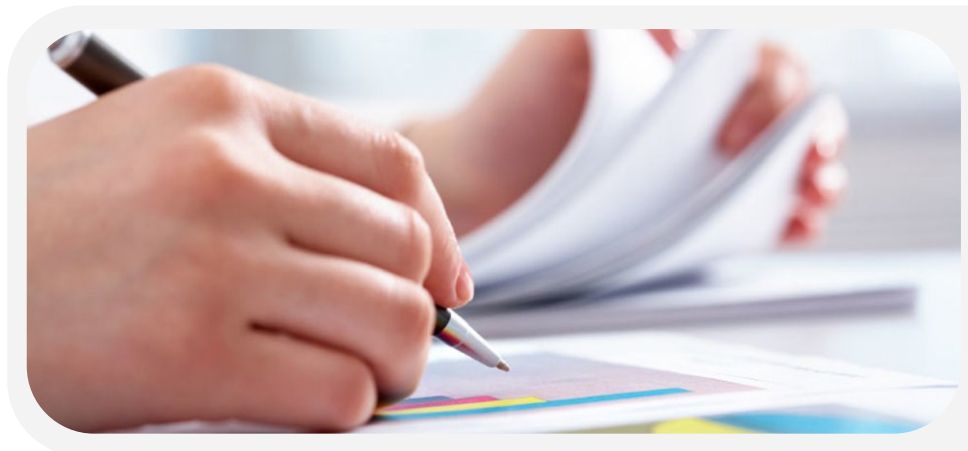
Look out for more information about Grade Pass Back coming soon...

SIS Friendly

The changes in the SIF Infrastructure Specification (global) 3.5 make life much easier for SIS vendors. For example, asynchronous processing allows the SIS to fully signal any problems that arise in grade processing. This feedback mechanism helps educators identify and correct problems early so the SIS can display accurate information in its parent portal and help educators calculate final grades in a timely manner.

LMS and Instructional Tool Friendly

One of the hardest problems for an LMS or other grade provider is knowing when the grade actually is available to SIS users, as opposed to being delivered to a connector. The 3.5 Infrastructure includes a notification system that was developed specifically to address this issue. Now systems that publish grades can receive additional information from the SIS or gradebook about when the actual SIS or gradebook database record was updated.



COME JOIN US!

pK20W+ Privacy & Interoperability Summit

DATE: November 7-9, 2023

VENUE: Hilton Arlington National Landing, VA

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community and The Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC) are formally coordinating their work to align the adoption of secure, trusted, free and open data standards and methods across the P-20W domain.

Our chosen theme for our inaugural Summit ***“Advancing Education through Digital Transformation: Collaborating for Success”*** reflects the core values and objectives of both A4L and PESC. Jointly, we believe that by fostering collaboration and leveraging technology, we can unlock new opportunities to enhance educational experiences, streamline processes, and empower learners and educators alike.

Join us at this landmark conference as we forge new pathways for digital transformation in education, ensuring access, equity, and excellence for the pK20W+ sector. Together, we can collaboratively shape the future of data



standards in education and make a lasting impact on the lives of students, educators, and educational institutions worldwide.

Registration is open until October 13, 2023, and a small group accommodation block has been reserved at the hotel. ***Don't forget, Premium Members get 15% off registration costs!***

The draft agenda can be found on the webpage: <https://bit.ly/A4L-PESC-Summit23>

Interested in sponsoring this event? Sponsorship opportunities are available, to find out more, [click here](#).

Don't miss out on an opportunity to present at the upcoming Summit! As we prepare for this highly anticipated event, we invite A4L Community members to take the lead and share their expertise.

Any questions, please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director.

We hope to see you in November!

A big thank you to our Sponsors including:

SILVER Sponsor



Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

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Call for Session Proposals

Don't miss out on an opportunity to present at the upcoming pK20W+ Privacy & Interoperability Summit!

As we prepare for this highly anticipated event, we invite A4L Community members to take the lead and share their expertise.

A4L and PESC are dedicated to fostering knowledge-sharing within our communities. In the spirit of this we have set aside two session slots for presentations. Priority consideration will be given to session submissions that showcase collaboration across pK20W+. We encourage you to use our collective community wisdom to spark meaningful discussions and ideas.

Priority will be given to session submissions demonstrating collaboration across pK20W+.

PLEASE NOTE: A4L Community & PESC require that all speakers, moderators, chairs & attendees of this Summit register and remit registration fees to attend.

Important Dates:

- Call for Session Proposals closes: September 22, 2023
- Summit Dates: November 7-9, 2023
- Registration closes: October 13, 2023

Submit YOUR session proposal TODAY!

Interested in sponsoring the pK20W+ Privacy & Interoperability Summit?

Get your organization 'front and center' of the fastest growing global educational non-profit community with thousands of potential customers.

"Advancing Education through Digital Transformation: Collaborating for Success" reflects the core values and objectives of both A4L and PESC. Jointly, we believe that by fostering collaboration and leveraging technology, we can unlock new opportunities to enhance educational experiences, streamline processes, and empower learners and educators alike.

Why Sponsorship Matters

By sponsoring this event, your organization will have the opportunity to:

Showcase Expertise: Position your organization as an industry authority in data privacy and interoperability within the education sector.

Network: Connect with decision-makers, influencers, and potential clients in the education technology space.

Increase Brand Visibility: Increase your brand's visibility and recognition among an engaged audience.

Demonstrate Community Leadership: Share insights, solutions, and best practices with Summit attendees.

Join us in shaping the future of education technology, data privacy, and interoperability. Together, we can make this Summit a memorable and transformative event for all.

Registrants and Presenting Partners made up of:

- K12: CIO, Curriculum Directors, Administrators & Educators;
- SEAs: Agency Administrators, Data Collection Coordinators, Privacy Officers;
- HE: CIO, Administrators, Privacy Officers; and
- Marketplace Providers: CEO, Marketing Leads, Privacy Leads and Developers.

More information on the various Sponsorship levels can be found on the event page: <https://home.a4l.org/privacy-interoperability-summit-2023/>

pK20W+ PRIVACY & INTEROPERABILITY SUMMIT

"Advancing Education through Digital Transformation: Collaborating for Success" reflects the core values and objectives of both A4L and PESC. Jointly, we believe that by fostering collaboration and leveraging technology, we can unlock new opportunities to enhance educational experiences, streamline processes, and empower learners and educators alike.

LOCATION: CRYSTAL CITY, VA
DATE: NOVEMBER 7-9, 2023

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship Level	Price	Availability
Bronze Sponsorship	\$1,000	15 available
Silver Sponsorship	\$2,500	10 available
Gold Sponsorship	\$5,000	3 available

For more information visit: <https://bit.ly/A4L-PESC-Summit23>

News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium

UPDATE: Global Education Security Standards (GESS)

The Global Education Security Standard (GESS) Project Team will resume their meetings and work on Thursday September 28.

This team will focus on a few tasks. The first of which will be to ensure GESS incorporates all of the suggested vendor controls in [this guidance](#) put out by the US Cybersecurity & Infra-

structure Security Agency (CISA) last month. This was released as part of the Whitehouse event highlighting cybersecurity in K12. Although it is VERY basic it will be important that we can show we cover all these requirements within GESS. Once this alignment is completed we believe CISA is interested in a discussion around partnership/endorsement.

Next the GESS Project Team will develop a strong PR campaign to promote GESS globally. Lastly the Project Team will be developing a new GESS assessment framework that is aligned to the ST4S work.

If you are interested in joining this Project Team please be sure to sign up on the [Community Site](#).

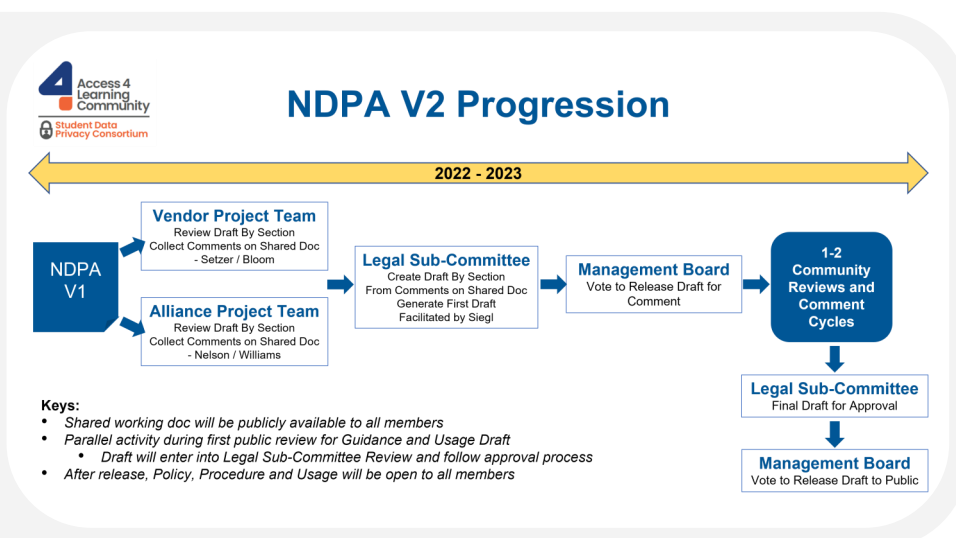
UPDATE: National Data Privacy Agreement (version 2)

The Community Review of the NDPA V2, draft 1 provided many productive suggestions. The SDPC Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee) is methodically addressing every com-

ment that was provided and drafting the next version of the NDPA V2 which will then go out for Community Review again.

Although the drafting of the NDPA V2 is taking much longer than originally predicted, we are confident that the end result will be worth the time and effort that everyone is devoting to the project.

The SDPC Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee) is doing an amazing job of considering all viewpoints and suggestions and adjusting the language to provide the best possible compromise that will work for everyone. This is yet another great example of the amazing work produced by our community.



Community Meetings Schedule

<u>Day</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Staff Liaison</u>
GLOBAL			
<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>			
Tuesday	2 nd Tues, monthly	Data Privacy	John Lovell
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	Policy & Procedures	Penny Murray
Wednesday	Every 2 weeks	Association Board of Directors	Steve Smith
Wednesday	Every 2 weeks	Infrastructure	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	Open Source Developers Network	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 4 weeks	International Technical Board	John Lovell
NORTH AMERICA			
<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>			
Monday	Every 2 weeks	State Requests	John Lovell
Tuesday	1 st & 3 rd Tues, monthly	Unity Adoption	John Lovell
Wednesday	3 rd Weds, monthly	NA Management Board	Steve Smith
Thursday	1 st & 3 rd Thurs, monthly	CEDS Alignment	John Lovell
Thursday	2 nd & 4 th Thurs, monthly	NA Technical Board	John Lovell
STUDENT DATA PRIVACY CONSORTIUM			
<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>			
Tuesday	1 st Tues, Qrtly (3 rd month)	SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3) Project Team	Penny Murray
Wednesday	3 rd Weds, monthly	SDPC Management Board	Steve Smith
Thursday	Weekly	SDPC Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee)	Penny Murray
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	Alliance Leadership	Penny Murray
Thursday	4 th Thurs, monthly	Global Education Security Standards (GESS)	Steve Smith
Thursday	1 st Thurs, Qrtly (2 nd month)	Vendor Project Team	Penny Murray

Connect with us!

Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community



Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC)



About the Access 4 Learning Community

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, and its special interest group the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of schools, districts, local authorities, states, US and International Ministries of Education, software vendors and consultants. The Community is “Powered by SIF” as its major technical tool to help manage learning data simply, securely and in a scalable, standard way regardless of platform. The SDPC is designed to address the day-to-day, real-world multi-faceted issues faced when protecting learner information by setting common expectations between market providers and end users. The A4L Community has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to **“connect and secure effective learning ecosystems”** to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach.

For further information, visit <https://www.A4L.org>

Contact Us



Steve Smith
Interim A4L Leadership

✉ ssmith@A4L.org



John Lovell
Technology Director

Provides technical leadership and as the primary resource for all things technical – from internal IT support to driving the global community efforts state-wide, nationally and internationally focused on both technical specification development and privacy support.

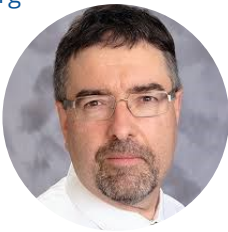
✉ jlovell@A4L.org



Penny Murray
Community Director

Provides leadership and ownership over providing “value-add” for members and potential members of the Association. This position gauges all aspects of member services including communications, marketing, support member working activities, organizational meetings and strategic partnerships to ensure initiative success.

✉ pmurray@A4L.org



Alex Jackl
Interim A4L Leadership



📍 P O Box 249, Malden, MA 02148

✉ staff@A4L.org

☎ +1.202.621.0547

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