

# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

---

## **Guidelines for Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice**

**ASAP MISSION STATEMENT:** We support and connect climate adaptation professionals to advance innovation and excellence in the field of practice.

ASAP is a professional society that is committed to helping America become better prepared for increasing challenges from weather extremes and climate change. These risks are not faced equally, as the consequences of climate change as well as ecological and social vulnerabilities differ across the nation. ASAP is committed to building adaptive capacity among all communities, but particularly those most vulnerable; it promotes approaches to preparedness, prevention, resilience building and adaptation that address whole systems; considers potential trade-offs and synergies; takes a long-term perspective; applies promising practices; and uses the best available science of past, current, and future conditions, encouraging and supporting co-production and processes that are just, inclusive, transparent and accessible to all concerned and potentially impacted. ASAP members bring to adaptation the highest professional and ethical standards, and provide advice on adaptation and resilience.

ASAP has adopted the following Guidelines for Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice (“Guidelines”) to enhance the benefits of the climate adaptation and related professional fields to humanity and the living systems upon which we all depend, to uphold the dignity and honor of the adaptation profession, and to provide guidance for individual members, institutional members, or for members in association with other professions. By participating in the Society, members agree to abide by these Guidelines, as well as any existing Codes of Ethics per their other professional societies, or to participate in discourse to revise the Guidelines.

### **VALUES AND BELIEFS**

The following represent the foundational values and beliefs that the American Society of Adaptation Professionals, and its members, hold:

- Adaptation and resilience build stronger, more prepared regions, ecosystems, communities, neighborhoods, and households by increasing awareness of vulnerability and risk, building capacity for proactive action, and investing in the safety and success of present and future generations.
- The natural world renders countless essential services that provide for the safety, nourishment, stability, and physical and emotional health of our society. As climate change continues to affect weather systems, these natural systems and services are at risk. As such, adaptation must fundamentally serve the interests and health of the natural world, because these interests also serve those of human health, security, and overall well-being.
- Due to the very nature of climate change and the likely inconsistency between future conditions and historical precedent, the dependable solutions of the past may be obsolete.

# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

---

Creativity, innovation and transformative problem solving will be essential tenets of work that aims to address new and changing climate conditions.

- Adaptation is and will continue to be a critical tool for ensuring that communities, infrastructure, the environment, cultural assets, our national security, and the economy continue to function and have the opportunity to thrive, despite increasing changes in climate.
- Adaptation research, policies, practices, and actions will be most effective when contextualized to the issues, location, and scale upon which solutions are being sought.
- Adaptive decision-making is essential as it considers the projected impacts of climate change, bears in mind the context of multiple stressors, is based on the best available science, is iterative, and takes into account both the current and future needs of whole communities while also alleviating degradation, minimizing impacts, and managing for uncertainties.
- Climate conditions are not static across regions or over time, and therefore adaptation strategies must be designed to adjust over spatial and temporal scales.
- In order to avoid maladaptation to longer-term climatic trends and minimize disproportionate impacts to some at the benefit of other regions, generations, social groups, or systems, adaptation strategies should, to the extent possible, be evaluated as to their impacts (positive and negative) to other systems, scales, and sectors.
- In support of informed decision-making, to the fullest extent possible, it is critical to integrate the consideration of future conditions and the full range of possible climate outcomes (including highly uncertain events) in planning for social, economic, ecological and other impacts, and in assessments of prospective risk and vulnerability.
- Climate adaptation strategies and processes should recognize the economic and social determinants that compound vulnerability to climate risks. Additionally, adaptation professionals should value the expertise and resilience held by low-income, underserved, and isolated communities. Adaptation processes should facilitate input from these communities, who often have social capital and local knowledge that can be valuable to crafting effective adaptive plans and action.
- Science is the basis for our climate adaptation knowledge. The scientific method provides a relatively objective means of identifying the factors necessary for climate adaptation in society, and for evaluating policies and programs to protect and promote climate adaptation and resilience. Use of the full range of scientific tools, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, the use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, collaboration among the disciplines, and the informed co-production of knowledge is desirable.
- Adaptation professionals are responsible to act on the basis of values as well as on what they know. Knowledge is not morally neutral and often demands action. However, in many instances, action is required in the absence of all the information one would like (i.e. in the situation of uncertainty). In other instances, policies are demanded by the fundamental value and dignity of each human being, even if implementing them is not calculated to be optimally efficient or cost-beneficial. In both of these situations, values inform the application of information or the action in the absence of information.

# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

---

## PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

### ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE

#### **Members should:**

- Advance the development of, and respect for, our profession by contributing to the knowledge and capability of the adaptation field as a whole, improving techniques and refining approaches in both science and practice, openly sharing practices, policies and lessons learned, ensuring solutions are relevant to community needs, and increasing public understanding of climate adaptation activities.
- Examine the applicability of adaptation theories, methods, research and practice to the facts and analysis of each particular situation and not accept the applicability of a standard solution without first establishing its appropriateness to the circumstances.
- Understand and make the relevant person(s) aware of the potential consequences of actions when giving advice.
- Provide timely, adequate, clear, and accurate information on planning, preparedness, mitigation, and adaptation issues and/or practice to all affected persons and decision-makers, as practicable.
- Look beyond one's professional expertise to the concerns of society, and acknowledge both the strengths and limitations of technology and practice.
- Work with colleagues across a broad range of disciplines to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and disasters.
- Endeavor to keep abreast of relevant scientific and technical developments through a combination of continued education, training, and learning through practical experience and mentoring.

### OPERATE WITH INTEGRITY

#### 1. SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

##### **Members should:**

- Ground their practice in sound scientific principles, employ established scientific methods, consider traditional ecological knowledge, base conclusions on factual evidence, reasonable judgment and professional expertise, and report findings, uncertainty and interpretations fully, accurately, and objectively.
- Take full responsibility for the trustworthiness of their research and practice.

#### 2. ETHICAL INTEGRITY

##### **Members should:**

- Reflect dignity and honor on their profession with excellence, integrity, fairness and honesty in all aspects of research, professional practice, and communication.
- Exercise impartiality, diligence and objectivity in their professional work, promoting and striving for high standards in adaptation.
- Be personally accountable, unselfish cooperators, and good stewards in the conduct of research and professional practice.
- Take responsibility for the integrity of contributions when sharing data, findings, and new knowledge, including respecting the intellectual property rights of others and

# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

---

giving credit where credit is due.

- Place quality and objectivity of research, practice, applications, and results ahead of personal gain or allegiance to individuals or organizations.
- Undertake professional services only when the member or team is qualified by education, training, or experience in the specific technical areas involved.

### 3. MANAGING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

#### **Members should:**

- Fully disclose financial, personal, professional, and other conflicts of interest that could compromise the trustworthiness of their work.
- Neither offer nor make any payment or gift to a public official with the intent of influencing the official's judgment in connection with an existing or prospective project in which the member is interested.
- Refrain from using confidential information for personal advantage.
- Refrain from engaging in private discussions with decision makers in any manner prohibited by law or by agency rules, procedures, or custom.
- Not use or display the official seal or logo of the ASAP unless duly authorized by the organization.

### 4. MANAGING LEGAL CONCERNS

#### **Members should:**

- Embrace the law governing their professional affairs.
- Conduct research and practice, to the fullest extent possible, in full understanding of all principles, norms, laws, rules, regulations, codes, and customs applicable to the relevant sectors and fields of practice for the adaptation work, including intellectual property.
- In circumstances where decisions or actions violate a law or regulation and/or adversely affect public safety, and the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved by other means, members shall: (a) advise their employer or client against the decision; (b) refuse to consent to the decision; and, (c) report the decision to the local or other public official charged with the enforcement of the applicable laws and regulations.
- Not engage in conduct involving fraud or wanton disregard of the rights of others.
- When the law does not support policies, practices, or programs that are in alignment with sound climate adaptation practices, work to define and/or communicate why those laws are societally malfeasant.

## **OPERATE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF CLIENTS AND THE PUBLIC**

### 1. FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF THE CLIENT

#### **Members should:**

- Serve clients competently, in a professional and timely manner, based on independent professional judgment, and exercise unprejudiced and unbiased judgment when performing all professional services.
- Accept the decisions of client or employer concerning the objectives and nature of professional services performed unless the course of action is illegal, or plainly

# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

---

- inconsistent with primary obligation to the public interest.
- Refrain from materially altering the scope or objectives of a project without the client's consent.
  - Be truthful, keep clients reasonably informed, and maintain confidentiality in professional communications with clients except when breach is necessary to prevent a clear violation of law, or to prevent a substantial injury to the public.
  - Fully and openly advise client as to the likelihood of project success and refrain from making exaggerated or unwarranted claims and statements.
  - Expect respect from and give respect to clients for professional knowledge, expertise, and guidance.
  - Promote and serve the public interest in personal and professional activities, and in the conduct of professional practice.
  - Actively and willingly work to improve societal standards in response to both social and technological change.

## 2. EMBRACE DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### **Members should:**

- Engage and interact fairly and evenhandedly with all participants in planning, preparedness, mitigation, and adaptation processes.
- Not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation in the profession.
- Increase opportunities for members of underrepresented groups to become adaptation professionals and help them advance in the profession.
- Ensure that community members and stakeholders have the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them, and include broad participation of those who lack formal organization or influence.
- Seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration.
- Conscientiously consider the specific impacts on and needs of underserved, under-resourced or isolated communities in adaptation analysis, assessment, planning, and implementation.

## 3. CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY, AND OBLIGATIONS TO THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

### **Members should:**

- Respect, protect and improve the environment, and quality of life within it, and preserve the cultural heritage of civilizations and societies.
- Endeavor to be an innovative, systems thinker in the pursuit of long-term goals of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.
- Support and promote sustainable actions and challenge unsustainable actions.
- Have respect for the future, recognizing that change is inevitable, and retain an open mind, driven by the need to create a more adapted and resilient future.

# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

---

- Respect future generations by recognizing that they will be more affected by what we do than by what we say.
- Do the utmost to set a good example and participate wholeheartedly in the wider community's efforts to inform and empower future adaptation professionals.

In addition to the above requirements of membership, ASAP encourages its members to embrace voluntary public interest or pro-bono activities as a contribution to building the field, such as: public education; engaging with ASAP to connect local, state, and national actions; participating in local public engagement or planning processes; testifying on local, state, or Federal adaptation policies; or other activities supporting, or in the pursuit of values as stated in the ASAP Guidelines for Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice