

# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

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## American Society of Adaptation Professionals 2021 Policy Priorities

### Introduction

ASAP is the professional home for close to 700 individuals and over 25 organizations from all sectors of society building essential climate resilience for communities, ecosystems, and economies across North America. ASAP members know that climate change is a real and serious danger to all sectors and systems whose root causes must be addressed; that adaptation and resilience are essential to combating the climate crisis; that equity and environmental justice must be central to our work; and that the natural world provides essential services and has intrinsic value. Addressing the climate crisis swiftly, with creativity and transformative thinking, will bring innumerable benefits to society.

#### ASAP's 2021 Policy Priorities are:

1. Establish standards for climate data and mandate use of future climate projections.
2. Treat climate change as a crisis and prioritize justice and equity in crisis response.
3. Overlay climate resilience needs on all infrastructure decisions.
4. Preserve, restore, and manage natural systems for climate resilience.
5. Define, develop, and train the climate change adaptation and climate resilience workforce.

These priorities articulate ASAP's responsibility to help create the conditions for members to undertake effective and just climate change adaptation and climate resilience work across all sectors and scales of economy and society. They reflect our responsibility to respond to our members' current needs as we implement ongoing response to the COVID-19 disaster and confront systemic racism. They call on policymakers to consider how the imperative to minimize climate risk and increase climate resilience for its communities, ecosystems, and economies intersects with this moment's urgent healthcare and economic needs.

ASAP's work, and this document, centers the needs of people and communities on the frontlines of climate change. People and communities on the frontlines of climate change are those that experience the consequences of climate change first and worst. They include people who are both highly exposed to climate risks because of the places they live and have fewer resources, capacity, safety nets, or political power to respond to those risks because of widespread discrimination, promoted by histories of colonialism, white supremacy, domination of nature, and economic exploitation. They include Black people, Indigeonous Peoples, people of color, people with low incomes and from low income backgrounds as well as other individuals and communities such as immigrants, those at-risk of displacement, old and young people, people experiencing homelessness, outdoor workers, incarcerated people, renters, people with disabilities, and chronically ill or hospitalized people.

Questions or feedback? Contact ASAP Deputy Director, [Rachel Jacobson](#).

## **1. Establish standards for climate data and mandate use of future climate projections.**

Using locally relevant climate data and climate projections and considering the full range of possible climate outcomes is foundational to effective adaptation. It is critical to establish mandates requiring that future climate conditions be integrated into all decisions including planning, investments, and government program requirements. This requires:

- Allocating adequate resources to existing programs that provide climate data, information, and technical assistance for all sectors and scales to support decision makers with locally relevant data, guidance on the integration of climate projections into decision making processes, and setting standards and codes.
- Taking legal and policy action to establish standards for disseminating and using climate data and information, requiring the use of forward looking climate information in government programs and investments, and requiring climate risk and vulnerability assessments.

## **2. Treat climate change as a crisis and prioritize justice and equity in crisis response.**

It is imperative to act with urgency and resolve to stop the root causes of climate change and to get money and resources in the hands of the people who are on the frontlines of climate change so they can adapt to irreversible impacts. To do this well, governments must:

- Acknowledge the root causes of unequally distributed climate impacts, namely systemic oppression and centuries of unequal investment. Address injustices, especially racial and economic injustices, at their core whenever possible to remove these barriers and create the conditions needed for individuals, communities, and systems to be able to adapt.
- Create dedicated funding streams for the people and communities on the frontlines of climate change and evaluate and eliminate challenges faced by frontline communities in accessing existing resources and services.
- Commit to fair decision-making processes by centering the needs and experiences of those on the frontlines of climate change in policies and programs. Ensure that all individuals and communities have power in the processes and decisions that may affect them.

### **3. Overlay climate resilience needs on all infrastructure decisions.**

Crumbling infrastructure inhibits the well-being of people, threatens our economy, and damages the health of our natural environment. To address this, governments should:

- Direct more government investment to infrastructure projects using existing and new finance mechanisms.
- Create incentives to ensure infrastructure investments align with global best practices in climate resilient design, integrate nature-based solutions, and support climate change mitigation goals.
- Update codes and standards to integrate current and future climate information to allow for infrastructure to accommodate accelerating changing climate conditions.
- Create standards that force property developers to invest in climate adaptive measures and to ensure companies and service providers have a level playing field when they respond to RFPs for infrastructure projects.

### **4. Preserve, restore, and manage natural systems for climate resilience.**

Natural systems have intrinsic value for millions of species, and provide services and functions that support them, including human life, economies, health and wellbeing. They provide irreplaceable regulating services that protect against climate impacts, and they provide the food, water, and materials necessary to sustain life, economies, and society. Continuing to benefit from these services as the climate changes requires:

- Increased uptake of ecosystem best management practices to retain ecological integrity and intactness of existing wildlands, halt land transformation in and around these lands, and introduce measures to halt carbon loss in land transformation. This includes standards for their implementation on government-owned lands and increased incentives -- including access to capital, information and education -- to promote implementation on private lands.
- Strengthening policies and laws that preserve and restore landscapes and ecosystems. Preservation and restoration are both necessary, with preservation being the most effective way to glean climate resilience benefits from mature, functioning landscapes and ecosystems. Therefore, stronger incentives and protections are needed to ensure preservation and to promote restoration where habitat has already been lost.

## **5. Define, develop, and train the climate change adaptation and climate resilience workforce.**

Climate change adaptation and climate resilience is a rapidly growing area of employment. Jobs span a large number of industries in every sector. In order to ensure equitable access to adaptation and resilience jobs, quality job performance, and consistent adaptation and resilience outcomes from work performed, governments need to collaborate with industry, labor, and education stakeholders to:

- Define the climate change adaptation and climate resilience workforce. This requires modifying or adding to occupation codes and classifications to integrate climate change adaptation and climate resilience workers, studying workforce needs and shortages, articulating adaptation and resilience career pathways, cultivating a shared identity for workers, and setting standards to ensure equitable access to entry level and career-building opportunities.
- Invest in -- and increase consistency of -- education and training for climate change adaptation and climate resilience workers. This includes identifying skills and competencies, developing targeted training and apprenticeship programs, increasing incentives for uptake of existing education products, and developing consistent evaluation standards for all education products. Investments in worker education, training, and solutions must be accessible to those on the frontlines of climate change.