

# ASAP STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

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# ASAP Strategic Planning Process

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## Executive Summary

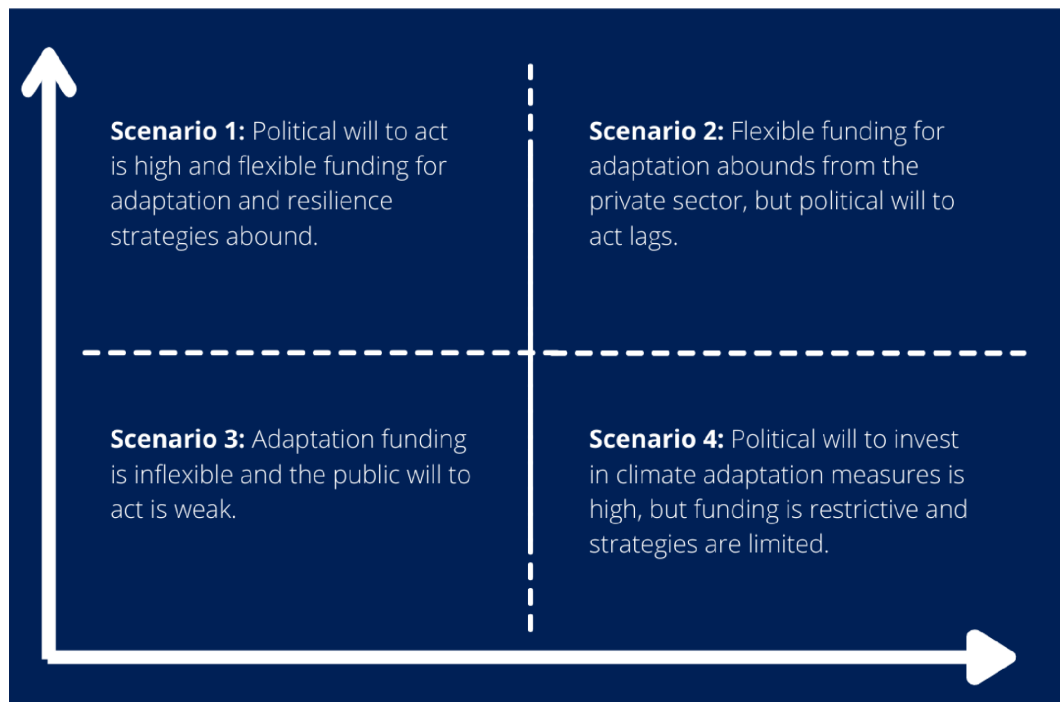
It has been a long, hard road but through the tireless and skilled work of countless climate professionals, including members of the [American Society of Adaptation Professionals](#), we have rung in 2040 with a stable climate, thriving ecosystems, more resilient places and people, and a nearly ubiquitous acceptance to live within our planetary boundaries.

Obviously it's not 2040...yet. But the [American Society of Adaptation Professionals](#) (ASAP) has created this Strategic Plan to chart a course for how to achieve the shared vision above. There are inherently many unknowns and uncertainties as we look to the future but this Strategic Plan, crafted by ASAP's membership, for ASAP members, helps provide a map for how we'll achieve a future that we, our kids, and seven generations hence can be proud of.

The content presented in this strategic plan is shaped around the following vision:

*ASAP is an inclusive and diverse community preparing our continent for the impacts of climate change. We empower and enable our communities to transform into places of social, economic and environmental resilience, where scientific, traditional and indigenous sources of knowledge and resources are openly shared, justly applied and collaboratively improved upon. All of our work reflects the flexibility and adaptability essential for impactful climate adaptation practice through our network.*

Recognizing that the world is not static, we used scenario planning to help identify potential actions the ASAP community could take to help operationalize this vision. Four scenarios were chosen to analyze, each containing elements of a feasible future:



Using these scenarios, ASAP was able to identify reliable courses of action with activities which will benefit the network, regardless of what the future holds. These priorities include:

- Accelerate knowledge exchange
- Transfer values on justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity across all sectors represented in the Network
- Evaluate adaptation and resilience practices and report on successes and opportunities for improvements and iteration
- Inform policy making on adaptation and resilience
- Grow the ASAP membership in numbers and of its diversity members
- Position the organization to benefit from public and private funding and grant program

As we look ahead to the next twenty years, there is little doubt our priorities will need to evolve to meet the growing demand for climate adaptation. We hope that by setting a foundation of scenario planning and laying a foundation for our long term strategic direction, we will be positioned to adapt and adjust to changes within and beyond ASAP, ensuring our enduring role as a community of professionals who will advance effective adaptation strategies, rooted in justice and equity. See a summary of the 2020-2040 Strategic Planning Process and ASAP Five Year Action Plan [here](#).

# Introduction

This document represents the American Society of Adaptation Professionals first strategic plan. Created by the ASAP membership for the ASAP membership, this living document charts a path to 2040 for the organization and its members. While the Plan does not focus on societal outcomes, we believe that the actions outlined in this Plan will directly lead to improvements in the quality of life and resilience of people, ecosystems, and the planet.

## Plan Purpose

Strategic Planning is a critical tool for organizations to create a shared purpose and determine appropriate work that aligns with that shared purpose. Our goal in this undertaking was to create a twenty year Strategic Planning Process and a Five Year Action Plan for ASAP to embark on with a bold, broad vision and a clear set of strategies. To be effective, Strategic Plans must be adaptive, so we have designed our planning process to work with incremental five-year action plans.

## Plan Audience

This Plan was created by and for the ASAP membership with the goal of being accessible and useful to all. Achieving the vision outlined in the Plan requires ASAP staff and member leaders should all be prepared to use this Plan, steward it and keep it living.

## Plan Process

### How ASAP members were involved and engaged through process.

In early 2020 ASAP's Strategic Planning Committee convened and began work to draft the plan. Over the course of 2020, two opportunities were held to receive feedback from the membership-at-large: 1) a dedicated *Strategic Planning All Member Meeting* in July 2020; and, 2) breakouts during the *Virtual Network Meeting* in October 2020. In early 2021, prior to plan finalization, members had a month-long opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan and participate in the final reading, review, and validation of comments.

### Explanation of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC).

The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was responsible for guiding the development of ASAP's first long-term strategic plan. The SPC developed a 20-year vision for ASAP, identified core principles to guide the Plan, created four future scenarios to inform the Plan, and identified strategic actions to advance the Plan.

### Timeline and application of Scenario Planning

ASAP believes climate adaptation should be rooted in iterative and adaptive management. As a result, adaptation practitioners must be nimble, revisiting and modifying their strategies and actions again and again. In a similar vein, we opted to employ Scenario Planning techniques to guide our Strategic Planning. Scenario Planning allows ASAP to generate a shared understanding of uncertainties and prioritize actions that will prepare the organization for multiple futures. To learn more about Scenario Planning, please see Appendix II.

## ASAP in 2020

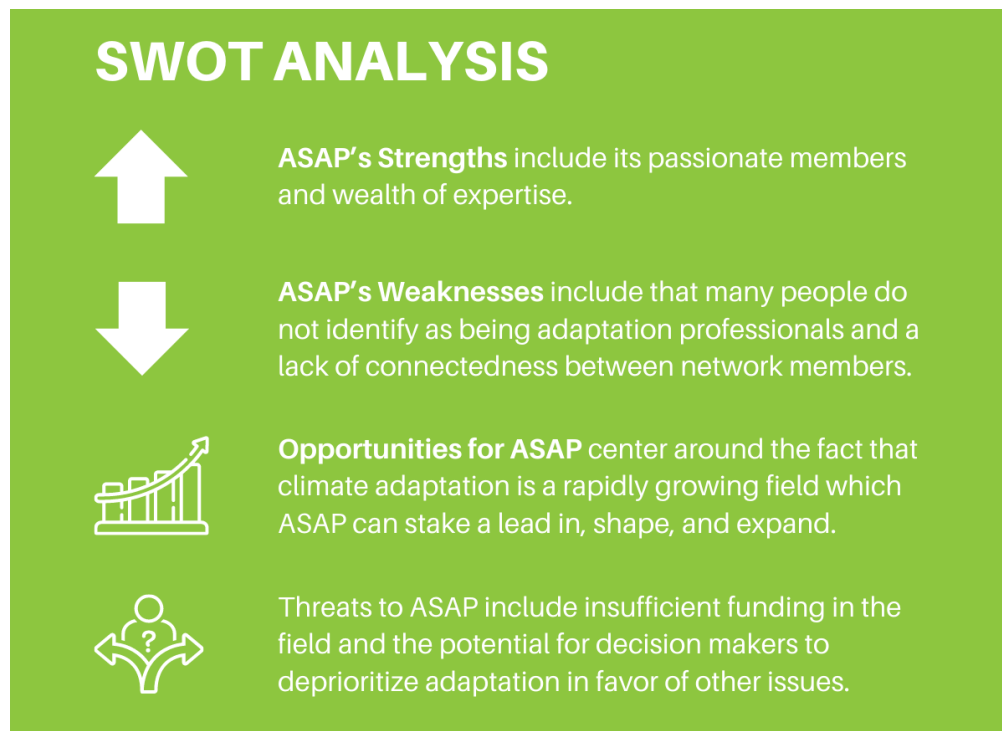
All organizations have Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). The SWOT analysis framework was used to identify internal and external factors that may contribute to or hinder ASAP's success, as a precursor to Strategic Planning.

**Strengths of the ASAP Network identified include:** stable financial position, networking, passionate members, and great expertise.

**Some weaknesses identified include:** barriers to membership (particularly fees), the fact that many people working in fields related to adaptation may not realize that they work in climate adaptation, the fact that there is a paucity of membership interaction in person (something which may not be as much of a problem in the post-COVID world) and a general lack of connectedness in the network.

**Opportunities for ASAP include:** recognition that climate adaptation is a rapidly growing field which ASAP can stake a lead in, a strong desire for standardization of the field, as well as an opportunity to shape and expand it.

**Threats to ASAP include:** insufficient investment in adaptation generally (especially in light of COVID), lack of awareness that individuals themselves are adaptation professionals, possibility that the field may fail to grow, and the potential adaptation may become less of a priority compared to other issues.



## Vision Statement Formation

The SWOT analysis was instrumental in helping ASAP understand current strengths, opportunities for improvement, and ways to position itself and its members to foster a more resilient nation. Based on the inputs gathered through the SWOT analysis, plus a review of ASAP member surveys, the [JEDI statement](#), the ASAP [Code of Ethics](#), other the ASAP background or foundational materials a sub-committee of the SPC created the vision noted below. This vision was vetted by members during a breakout of the 2020 Network Meeting and revised based on that input.

### Vision Statement 2040

*ASAP is an inclusive and diverse community preparing our continent for the impacts of climate change. We empower and enable our communities to transform into places of social, economic and environmental resilience, where scientific, traditional and indigenous sources of knowledge and resources are openly shared, justly applied and collaboratively improved upon. All of our work reflects the flexibility and adaptability essential for impactful climate adaptation practice through our network.*

## Guiding Criteria Formation

To provide guidance in operationalizing the vision, the SPC created guiding criteria. The guiding criteria were developed through a series of discussions, ranked by ASAP members (via survey), and finalized by the SPC. These guiding criteria help ASAP prioritize actions that align with the organization's values. They are dynamic - they should be revised and re-ranked as needed in the future.

### Guiding Criteria

1. Does this action advance ASAP's mission?
2. Is this action consistent with ASAP's justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion commitments?
3. Is this action feasible given staff and financial capacity?
4. Will this action enable ASAP members to make transformative, positive change?
5. Does the ASAP membership support this action?
6. Are members the ones advancing this action?
7. Does this action strengthen the ASAP Network, for example, by: building members' capacity, increasing membership, or growing partnerships?

#### *Expectations for the use of Guiding Criteria:*

- These criteria are intended to be used by ASAP leadership and staff, as well as any members that may take action on behalf of or in support of ASAP's members. These criteria are not intended to be all inclusive, and not all of them will be applicable for all actions.
- They will be updated in conjunction with the mission and vision, though leadership and membership can change them separately, if they collectively decide to do so.



# Scenario Planning Process

## Scenario Planning Purpose and Formation

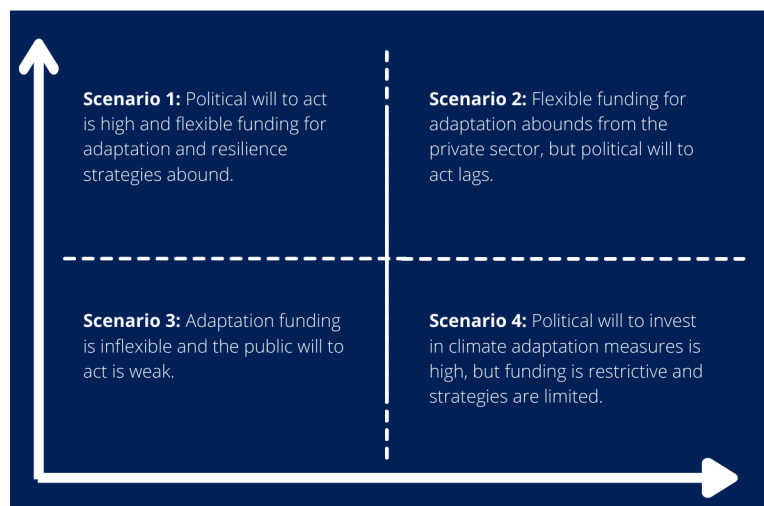
Scenario planning is a tool that embraces uncertainty rather than trying to reduce or eliminate it. It can help decision-makers generate creative approaches to planning, thinking outside the historical or most obvious trends to incorporate uncertainty as a factor in prioritizing their actions. In scenario planning, decision-makers set the background context by deciding what trends are relatively certain, then select two “deep uncertainties,” or drivers of change that are expected to change the decision-making landscape of the topic/problem at hand. Deep uncertainties are things that could go one of two ways, with these paths being mutually exclusive. Next, decision makers overlay the two potential directions of change on each other in the context of known trends to create four “scenarios,” or possible futures, in which to consider long-term effects of present-day decisions. Decision-makers can focus on what actions might be robust to the possible futures in order to create a low-regrets plan. This technique can also be used to formulate a plan that would optimize outcomes in the worst-case future.

## Scenario Planning Process and Results

Through this scenario planning process ASAP identified two deep uncertainties:

- **Deep Uncertainty 1:** Availability of Flexible Funding
- **Deep Uncertainty 2:** Level of Political Will

The four resulting Scenarios from these two plotted uncertainties are:



Applying scenarios to a decision making process includes painting a picture of what working through these various future scenarios would look like. The imagined headlines were developed to help paint a picture of what the world looks like in each of the four scenarios. ASAP members identified what these various scenarios would mean for ASAP as it strives to fulfill the 2040 mission and what prioritized activities are needed under each scenario.



<p><b><u>Scenario 1:</u></b> Political will to act is high and flexible funding for adaptation and resilience strategies abound.</p> <p><b><u>News Headlines:</u></b></p> <p><i>“Public &amp; Private Leaders Alike Flock to be Next to Announce Climate Resilience &amp; Adaptation Investments”</i></p> <p><b><u>Characteristics of the Adaptation Field</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The public and private sectors work together to enable adaptation action.</li> <li>• People benefit from strong public programs which include incentives for innovative adaptation approaches.</li> <li>• Resources and need for adaptation professional training programs abound.</li> <li>• A thriving private sector benefits from standards for experimentation and excellence set by public entities.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Scenario 2:</u></b> Flexible funding for adaptation abounds from the private sector, but political will to act lags.</p> <p><b><u>News Headlines:</u></b></p> <p><i>“Blackrock moves to disinvest from any company failing to disclose climate risk. Coastal communities brace for economic fallout.”</i></p> <p><b><u>Characteristics of the Adaptation Field</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private sector companies drive priorities, with minimal standards and public leadership.</li> <li>• Training adaptation professionals as a group is difficult due to lack of unified priorities and standards.</li> <li>• Experimentation is welcome, but support is episodic.</li> <li>• Private coordination is necessary to exchange ideas.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Scenario 3:</u></b> Adaptation funding is inflexible and the public will to act is weak</p> <p><b><u>News Headlines:</u></b></p> <p><i>“Suffering through climate losses remains preferable to investing in national resilience &amp; well-being”</i></p> <p><b><u>Characteristics of the Adaptation Field</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private investment from companies and philanthropies drives action &amp; priorities.</li> <li>• Decisionmaking is top-down and power is concentrated at the top.</li> <li>• It is difficult to train adaptation professionals as a group because there are many competing priorities.</li> <li>• Individuals protect themselves against climate impacts.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Scenario 4:</u></b> Political will to invest in climate adaptation measures is high, but funding is restrictive and strategies are limited.</p> <p><b><u>News Headlines:</u></b></p> <p><i>“ASAP finishes integrating JEDI Principles into the 3 approved adaptation strategies for each US climate region.”</i></p> <p><b><u>Characteristics of the Adaptation Field</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public entities dictate actions and there are very few adaptation solutions available.</li> <li>• It is easy to train adaptation professionals as a group because there are limited strategies to learn.</li> <li>• Adaptation is highly expertized, decision making is highly centralized, and there are limited opportunities for diverse careers in adaptation.</li> <li>• Policies and standards must be influenced early because once they are set there are limited opportunities for improvement.</li> </ul>



## From 2021 - 2026: Moving From Scenarios to Action Strategies





After reviewing the potential scenarios ASAP members considered what prioritized actions would look like for ASAP to be effective at achieving its mission under each of these futures. A list of prioritized actions were established under each scenario; those which emerged in more than one scenario are recorded below as “Standing Priorities”.

Standing Priorities Include:

- ASAP accelerates knowledge exchange
- ASAP transfers values on justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity across all sectors (policy, private, practice, and academia)
- ASAP evaluates adaptation and resilience practices and reports on successes and opportunities for improvements and iteration
- ASAP informs policy making on adaptation and resilience
- ASAP grows its membership in numbers & diversity members
- ASAP positions itself to benefit from public and private funding and grant programs

ASAP’s goals over the next five years build from the standing priorities and contextualizes these priorities based on feedback that staff receive through the member survey, facilitation of the network and observations of the climate change adaptation field and associated industries. The table below shows proposed actions over the next five years to operationalize these priorities.

Standing Priority	2021-2026 Five Year Action Plan Themes
 Accelerate knowledge exchange	<p><b>Train, educate, connect, and support ASAP members</b> through peer learning and formal training programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By 2026, ASAP is engaging 2,000 people/year in peer learning opportunities.</li><li>• By 2026, ASAP is training 1,000 people/year through formal education programs.</li></ul>
 Evaluate practices, report on successes	<p><b>Cultivate ASAP’s brand and reputation</b> so that companies, organizations, the media, and governments consistently - and first - turn to ASAP and its members for expertise and trusted information on climate adaptation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Between now and 2026, companies and organizations increasingly turn to ASAP and its members for expertise and trusted information to improve their climate adaptation products and services.</li><li>• Between now and 2026, companies and organizations that need to hire adaptation professionals and workers increasingly look to ASAP and its members.</li><li>• Between now and 2026, media outlets increasingly turn to ASAP and its members for expertise and trusted information.</li></ul>

 <p>Center justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion</p>	<p><b>Ally ASAP with the environmental and climate justice movements</b> and put in place systems and relationships that allow ASAP to change and evolve to meet the movement's demands and needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2026, ASAP and its members are able to articulate how climate adaptation is seen and understood in the climate and environmental justice movements.</li> <li>• By 2026, ASAP holds relationships with trusted partners in the climate and environmental justice movements who help guide ASAP's messaging and advise ASAP on when and how to mobilize our network for action.</li> <li>• Between 2024-2026, ASAP provides members opportunities to take action to support the climate and environmental justice movements.</li> </ul>
 <p>Inform policy</p>	<p><b>Advocate for transformational adaptation policy</b> that is aligned with local and global needs for holistic climate action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between now and 2026, policymakers in the U.S. and Canada increasingly turn to ASAP and its members for expertise to shape effective adaptation policy informed by the work of adaptation professionals.</li> <li>• Between now and 2026, adaptation professionals gain increased access to tools and resources that enable them to engage in policy advocacy at local, sub-national, and national levels in the U.S. and Canada.</li> <li>• Between 2024-2026, ASAP provides members with opportunities to engage in international climate policy efforts.</li> </ul>
 <p>Grow and diversify the network.</p>	<p><b>Grow and diversify the ASAP network</b> to include more geographies and people from many racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By September 2026, ASAP has 5,000 individual members and 100 organizational members.</li> <li>• By September 2026, the ASAP membership, ASAP Board of Directors, and ASAP Member Leaders are made up of at least 40% Black people, Indigenous people, or other people of color.</li> <li>• By September 2026, ASAP has at least 300 members who primarily live or work outside of the US.</li> </ul>
 <p>Position ASAP for funding</p>	<p><b>Uphold organizational strength and integrity</b> by growing ASAP's revenue and ensuring ASAP remains a phenomenal place to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2026, ASAP's budget grows to \$3.5M annual with a diverse mix of revenue from membership dues, donations, grants, training and events, and fee for service work.</li> <li>• Between now and 2026, all ASAP staff will have positive experiences as members of the staff team and be satisfied with the compensation ASAP provides.</li> </ul>

## Next Steps for 2021

The Strategic Priorities that have emerged from this Strategic Planning Process are *living* - they will be revisited and adapted. This includes reconvening the SPC every five years, checking which scenario we are most aligned with, and enabling ASAP staff to iteratively create shorter term action plans. We look forward to embodying the vision and priorities shared in this Plan with ASAP members, staff, and the ASAP Board of Directors all playing integral parts in advancing our organization's vital work.

## Appendix I: Strategic Planning Committee Members

A big thank you to all the ASAP staff for coordinating this effort, especially during everything going on in 2020 and 2021. And for supporting the strategic planning steering committee, comprised of:

Daniel Burger  
Josh Foster  
Jim Fox  
Isaac Gendler  
Dave Hampton  
Arlene Hopkins  
Patrick Marchman

David Merino  
Jeffrey Meek  
Sara Moore  
John Phillips  
Melissa Ocana  
David Robertson  
Missy Stults

## Appendix II: Scenario Planning

[Benefits of Scenario Planning](#) [Definition of Deep Uncertainties](#)

This appendix, created by ASAP member Sara Moore, provides more detail about Scenario Planning.

# This Is ASAP

We connect and support climate adaptation professionals to advance excellence and innovation in the field of adaptation.

