



American Planning Association
California Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All



STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2025

PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY ENVISION CONSULTING



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www.apacalifornia.org

If you have questions about this plan or want to be part of our work, please contact us at support@apacalifornia.org.

SITUATION OVERVIEW



BACKGROUND

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

With more than 5,000 members statewide, APA California is a network of practicing planners, citizens, and elected officials committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning in California. APA California offers a wide spectrum of member benefits including information, services, and support to advance the profession and practice of planning in California.

In the fall and winter of 2021-22, APA California leadership embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide the organization's priorities for the next four years. Key questions and priorities for the organization to address within this process included amplifying its influence and more effectively reaching and serving a broader base of planners and communities throughout the state.

In response to these strategic questions, the Board of Directors chose to develop its first organizational vision statement, as well as update its mission and core values statements as the foundations for a new strategic framework to guide the organization's choices and work for the coming four years.

The Strategic Planning Committee and Board developed the following SWOT assessment during the situation analysis phase of planning:

SITUATION OVERVIEW

STRENGTHS

- Leadership
- Membership base
- Education/professional development
- Networking
- Conferences/events
- Professional support
- Legislative program



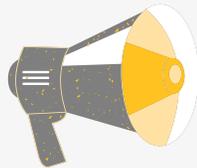
WEAKNESSES

- Organization structure/capacity
- Membership engagement/leadership pipeline
- Communication
- Program cost effectiveness/member value



OPPORTUNITIES

- Emerging, younger, more diverse planners
- Technology - virtual programming, resources
- Need for leadership voice on statewide issues
- Changing program needs of membership base



THREATS

- Competition for members/engagement
- Misunderstandings of profession/perception of relevance
- Declining membership base
- Economic/pandemic related challenges



WHO WE SERVE: OUR MEMBERS

APA California is the primary professional development and networking organization for professional planners working in local and state government and related policy organizations throughout California.

As part of this planning process, the APA California Board thought critically about defining its audience more broadly, and developed multiple goals and strategies designed to expand its reach and more effectively engage a greater number of people who “do” planning, even if they do not have the specific degree or title. To broaden the organization’s reach, the 4-year vision and goals contained in this plan focus on greater connection and outreach to planners through increased policy advocacy and an improved overall communication strategy.

In addition, the APA California Board targeted specific goals and strategies to provide the appropriate career and leadership development support needed by a younger and more diverse planner population, and to empower communities by planning “with” them instead of “for” them.

APA California decision makers also focused discussion and strategic choices on strengthening connections between and among geographic regions throughout the state to ensure information, networking, best practices, and support are broadly shared by all planners.





WHAT WE DO: PROGRAMS & SERVICES

APA California's core service areas are providing continuing education and professional development for planners; advocating for excellent planning practices and policies; and providing opportunities for networking among planners across planning specializations and the state.

APA CALIFORNIA'S CURRENT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Website
- eNews email blasts
- Professional development /AICP certification maintenance
- Job postings
- Legislative program
- Young & Emerging Planners programs
- Annual report
- Annual conference
- CalPlanner newsletter
- Awards program
- Networking opportunities
- Social media
- Equity, diversity and inclusion programs
- Planning Commissioner education program

Through this strategic planning process, APA California set goals to continue providing value to meet the needs of today's planners and communities. APA California has committed to increasing the reach and effectiveness of its advocacy as well as developing and expanding educational and networking benefits and activities for younger and more diverse planners. APA California also has pledged to encourage communication and collaboration across its sections and through enhanced partnerships with allied organizations.



HOW WE OPERATE

APA California is a primarily volunteer organization, governed by a 40-member Board and supported by an Executive Director and 11 other contractors. The Board consists of 11 elected Executive Board members (a President and Vice Presidents who oversee key program areas/functions), an appointed Student Representative, and 15 appointed officers, the Section Directors, the three individuals holding National APA positions for Region VI, and the presidents of affiliated organizations.

There are eight regional Sections of APA California throughout the state, each with its own board and programming. In recent years, each Section has also appointed a Young and Emerging Planners coordinator to develop and oversee networking events and other programming to help recruit and support early career professionals in planning and related fields.

In order to enhance continuity and consistency in serving the full California planning community through advocacy, professional development, and networking, the APA California Board developed goals and strategies that include enhancing the organizational structure by clarifying Board and staff responsibilities and considering new positions/reallocation as appropriate; improving onboarding and support of incoming Board members; strengthening leadership development and recruitment, particularly focused on younger and more diverse planners; and drawing more on resources and approaches utilized by APA National to inform and develop the chapter's structure and leadership.

Concurrent with this strategic planning process, the APA California Board also made the decision to engage a management firm to oversee the operations and communications of the chapter.

WHY IT MATTERS: OUR IMPACT



Discussions during the strategic planning process centered around a deeply held, shared idea that good planning is critical to the well-being of communities. APA California has a key role to support excellent planning policy and practice throughout the state and beyond by supporting and educating planners, broadly defined, in their learning, career development, and interactions with policy makers and the communities they serve.

The recognition of the importance and impact of doing planning well was perhaps the driving force behind the development of the new organizational vision statement adopted as part of this strategic plan. That vision places emphasis on the planning profession's responsibility for planning "with" rather than "for" communities. It is also reflected in the mission statement's focus to empower planners to best serve their communities, and in the core values, which include commitment to public service as key to ensuring equity for communities.



VISION AND MISSION



During this strategic planning process, the APA California Board gave significant thoughtful consideration to the statements that provide the foundation for all of its work. The Board chose to articulate an organizational vision statement for the first time, as well as to revise and update its mission and core values statements to fully reflect the organization's purpose and priorities.

VISION

APA California is leading, innovating, and advocating for a future in which all people, in California and beyond, have an equitable opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and share in their communities' environmental, social, and economic well-being.

MISSION

APA California serves as a resource for and voice of professional planning in California. We empower planning professionals to best serve their communities by facilitating professional growth and advocating for excellent planning.



CORE VALUES

Inclusion: In our work with members and within communities, we seek to be representative and fully inclusive of community goals and perspectives in our membership and leadership, to engage and empower all community members to participate in democracy and civic leadership, and to ensure that we are planning with communities, not for them.

Leadership: We demonstrate leadership through action, serving as a voice for the planning profession and advocating for change that benefits all communities. By being innovative and adaptable, we seek to serve as a resource to our colleagues and pave the way for our profession.

Integrity: We hold ourselves to the highest possible standards of ethics and professionalism. We provide expertise and consistency, earning the trust of planners, communities, and decision makers in the work we do.

Community: We provide a sense of fellowship and camaraderie among planners, and strive to convene safe, open discussion on challenging topics related to planning in our communities.

Commitment to Public Service: We work to advance the public interest and ensure fair and equitable access to community benefits and amenities.

Sustainability: We remain committed to the principle that environmental, social, and fiscal responsibility must be integrated into all planning policy so that communities remain healthy and viable for the long term.

4 YEAR VISION



In 4 years, APA California will have elevated its visibility, influence, and engagement with planners, decision makers, and communities statewide, and strengthened both the field and the organization, primarily through enhancing legislative advocacy and communications; increasing the diversity of its membership; investing in leadership development through creating a robust, diverse pipeline of emerging leaders; and improving consistency of engagement with and support of planners throughout the state.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1. Enhance APA California’s role in advocacy by facilitating strengthened and broadened communications between and among the organization’s leadership, sections, members, policymakers, and the broader field of planning and planning-related professionals.

A. Improve relevance, clarity, and effectiveness of existing legislative policy communications; distribute more broadly beyond membership.

B. Facilitate increased dialogue between planners and local, regional, and state level policymakers.

C. Inform and educate policymakers and planners about policy issues, in addition to advocating for specific positions.

D. On key issues, solicit input from broad planning community across the state to inform APA California’s policy position and possibly draft policy.

E. Seek relevant and appropriate opportunities to partner with affiliated organizations to convene education/discussion and expand influence on policy issues.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 2. Expand diversity – across a variety of dimensions (e.g., racial/ethnic, age, economic, educational, ability, geographic) of APA California membership and leadership to meaningfully represent the communities we serve.

- A.** Strengthen relationships with post-secondary institutions to demonstrate value and benefit of APA membership for young planners.
- B.** Build out mentorship efforts; learn from successes in sections and expand to the rest of California, considering the chapter's role.
- C.** Provide support to help make Young & Emerging Planners (YEP) activities more consistent across sections; consider whether YEP should be directly linked to section/chapter organization.
- D.** Focus recruitment and leadership development in underrepresented regions of the state.
- E.** Convene and engage in conversations that acknowledge ways past planning practice and policy have resulted in structural inequities in communities and how to redress.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 3: Strengthen organizational structure and Board engagement to develop consistency and sustainability of the organization's vision and impact throughout the state.

- A.** Consider appropriate Board terms and strengthen documentation, communication, and tracking of responsibilities, and leadership recruitment process to ensure adequate development of new members and support for fulfilling roles.
- B.** Implement staff/contractor roles and structure to support overall organizational goals and priorities, within available resources.
- C.** Leverage resources, insights, and connections from APA National and national leaders in planning to build APA California's leadership position and infrastructure.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 4: Improve member services to serve as a “home for planners” and deliver valued benefits.

- A.** Encourage learning and networking statewide, across sections, through in-person, virtual, and hybrid events.
- B.** Increase support for sections that lack the resources of larger or more urban sections.
- C.** Develop partnerships with allied organizations to enhance professional development for members and increase relevance and connections.
- D.** Identify and develop statewide programs and initiatives (such as mentoring) to enhance shared learning and sense of statewide chapter unity.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 5: Develop and implement a strategic communication plan to improve engagement between chapter and members, as well as chapter and sections.

- A.** Enhance and make more consistent and balanced chapter communication with members.
- B.** Enhance communication between chapter and sections.



IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to the goals and strategies articulated within this plan, the APA California Board developed a workplan for the first two years covered by the plan, including key activities, ownership, and success metrics. This workplan will be monitored, updated, and extended to cover the remaining two years of the strategic plan. Building a parallel workplan that specifies accountability and opportunities for feedback and adaptation will ensure successful strategic plan implementation.