AAG Strategic Plan

2023-2025

Contents

I.   Introduction

Strategic plans are a vital tool for the AAG. By focusing the organization's commitments of time, energy, and funds on the highest priorities over the next three years, we set the AAG up for success in the future. Combining feedback from the interviews from Council and staff and the subsequent conversations with Council and staff, senior staff boiled down the ideas into five areas. Here we present the final plan for adoption. Context from the current strategic plan, the recently approved JEDI plan, and implications of future scenarios are offered throughout this document.

Focus Categories	Description
Elevate the Discipline	Elevate the discipline by showing how Geography is essential to understanding and solving the world's most pressing issues. A tiered program will be launched to train geographers in leadership, media, and policy, and then connect and elevate their work in the public discourse (media + policy).
Programming	Improve our Annual Meeting and Virtual Platforms by ensuring our programs have measurable impact that serve our core and growing membership groups. We will also improve our delivery services and efficiency in design, planning, implementation, and metrics.
Membership	Overhaul our membership approach, focused on retaining and growing core membership and targeted growth of key member segments, including community colleges, physical geography, and professionals. This work includes improvements in systems, analyses, reports, member data management, segmentation, incentives, and fee structure.
Community	Enhance our engagement and outreach services to strengthen and grow our communities, especially within Specialty Groups, Regions, and Departments. This approach also serves as a pipeline to develop emerging groups, such as AAG Communities, to support membership goals and trends across the field.
Organizational Excellence	Optimize the operational capabilities, efficiency, and performance of our support systems — HR, IT, Finance, Governance – by fine tuning our systems, processes, data management, and technology. Invest in organizational effectiveness and staff training. Develop an inclusive and thoughtful leadership development strategy for involving members in service to the AAG— e.g., Council, committees, Specialty and Affinity Groups—creating a pipeline of engaged leaders in the discipline.

II. Progress on Current Plan

As we approach the end of the timeframe for the current strategic plan, we can assess our progress and areas of continuation. The pandemic made progress challenging. In addition, the AAG responded to COVID by launching nine new programs as part of its Rapid Response. Over this period, the JEDI Strategic Plan was completed and adopted.

Here is the short list of the programs and expected completion score by Dec 2022 (w/successes in brief):

AAG 2020-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

Advancing Geography as a Discipline

Promoting Geography – Outreach Campaign……………………………85% (study and outreach video)

Advancing Policy and Advocacy…………………………………………………60% (tenets, Congress+, grassroots)

Championing the Discipline – Heathy Departments…………………70% (renewed Committee, revised Guide)

Ensuring World-Class Membership Services

Improving Membership Services, Model, and Growth………………25% (revised database, senior hire)

Enhancing Annual Meetings………………………………………………………90% (virtual platform, meetings, regions)

Upgrading Digital and Online Platforms…………………………………100% (website, database launched)

Formalizing GeoEthics, Member Standards and Practices………100% (webinars, summit, white paper, statement)

Enhancing AAG Excellence as a Membership Association

Improving Business Model and Finance…………………………………100% (complete divestment, forecast, budgets)

Formalizing Human Resources and Operating Procedures…….100% (HR Teams, handbook, professional training)

Upgrading Meridian Place…………………………………………………..100% (sale and lease; LEED Gold)

III. What Carries Forward

Many aspects of the current plan will continue even if not detailed specifically in the new plan. Examples include the continuation of GeoEthics efforts arising from the work to date, continuing to work with the Healthy Departments Committee to deliver more services to departments, and supporting the new Guide and its associated analyses. The new plan combines unfinished elements of the current plan, repackaging them in new programs. For example, Elevate the Discipline combines all the elements of Advancing Geography as a Discipline.

The 2019-22 plan can be accessed here:

https://www.aag.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/AAG_Strategic_Plan_20202022.pdf

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan

This 32-point plan was approved by Council in October 2021. As we consider the scope of the new aspects of the strategic plan, please bear in mind that these elements comprise the foundation of the new plan. For reference, here is the outline:

Advancing Leadership Capabilities for JEDI	Establishing Organizational Tools to Support JEDI	Integrating JEDI into Programming
• Dedicating leadership resources	• Engaging through communication	• Embedding JEDI in AAG programming
• Enhancing AAG policies and practices	• Curating JEDI knowledge	• Fostering healthy departments
• Enabling data-driven D&I excellence		• Growing geography's next generation

Link to the full plan:

https://www.aag.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/AAG-3-Year-JEDI-Strategic-Plan.pdf

IV.   The New Plan

A. ELEVATE THE DISCIPLINE

Situation: Geography is an essential way of understanding the world and solving its most pressing problems. However, marketing something as interdisciplinary as Geography is inherently challenging and connections to real world problems and issues of the moment are obscured by the plethora of sub-disciplines which are unconnected to geography in the public consciousness. By training and showcasing geographers in action, we can demonstrate the relevance and essential nature of the discipline AND advance the careers of those geographers. Elevating Geography in the minds of the public will help the world understand why geography not only matters, but why it is essential.

Why Geographers? Geographers are inherently interdisciplinary – they are taught to be so. Within geography, you find professionals with expertise in the physical, social, and technological world. Geographers also, by training, have expertise in knowing that there are other things to consider, other opinions to capture, other knowledge bases to consult if you are indeed going to understand root causes, identify the entire system, and develop and scrutinize potential solutions and their implications.

Geography and Grand Challenges: The world's grand challenges are complex and multi-faceted. They often occur on multiple scales, from the local to national to global. They involve the physical world (natural resources, climate, habitat, etc.) and the socio-cultural world (economies, government, cultural practices, etc.), as well as a need for technological know-how and solutions to address them. Geographers are critical in a world that emphasizes specialists and specialties but requires cross-cutting collaboration and vision. Geographers know how to find, consult, and bring together a community of researchers and participants. Geographers also bring together outside specialists to create thoughtful and comprehensive approaches to the world's issues.

Opportunity: AAG can provide a range of training opportunities and resources to help geographers connect their work to public and policy arenas. By showcasing geographers engaged in the world's most pressing issues, we can help educate the public about why geography matters, college students looking for a major, decisionmakers looking for insights and solutions, and funders in common cause with the challenge. By connecting academic work to the media and policy worlds, we amplify the impact of the work and value to the world.

Goals and Objectives: Create a three-tiered program that offers opportunities to train and connect the work of all members to public and policy arenas. Three tiers are envisioned to reach as many geographers as possible. The Cohort Tier will focus intense training and support on 10-15 applicants working on a specific theme each year. The Program Tier will offer virtual and in-person training to members working in any area. The Resource Tier will offer multimedia materials for any member to consult and use at any time.

Cohort Tier: Commit to an inaugural challenge (e.g., climate change). Seek funders and partners. Recruit and mobilize cohorts of geographers working in these areas. Train each cohort in leadership and thereafter in media engagement and policy advocacy. Connect cohorts to media and deploy cohorts to appear in high profile media and policy settings. By focusing on elevating the cohort, the AAG value add is the training (leadership, media, policy) and connection (decision makers, funders, politicians, and the media).

Program Tier: Develop and launch a speaker series and training program as part of AAG's year-round programming. Additional content and offerings will be available at the Annual Meeting, including testimonials from cohorts and experts in media and policy. Participants will sign up for one or more offerings to enhance their skills and abilities.

Resource Tier: Establish a resource hub with multimedia offerings which allow members to consult, learn, and browse at any time. This resource hub ensures that all members can benefit from the program at any stage of career or level of interest.

Timeline:

Initial Steps: Finalize structure and staffing. Scope funding sources overall. Build out training plans. Seek partnerships and funding.

First Cohort: Climate Change and Society will be the theme of the inaugural grand challenge with a three-year commitment. Climate change and society covers the broad spectrum of research and impacts from a changing climate. For example, research on patterns of energy, water, and food scarcity as well as social and environmental impact and justice around the world. Additional themes and cohorts will be added as funding allows.

Year 1:
- Establish Steering Committee and Selection Committee
- Announce Elevate the Discipline with a call for applicants to the first cohort: Climate Change and Society
- Recruit Cohort – call for applications, screen, select
- Train Cohort – common problem-solving practices, media, policy, leadership
- Connect Cohort to Advocacy or Media – geography in action and connected to the public square or town hall
- Tell the story – profile cohort, discuss grand challenge, publicize the public connections
- Measure Impact – define qualitative and quantitative measures of results and impact
- Begin to build out a Resource hub

Year 2 (2024):
- Repeat. Add cohorts and challenges as funding permits
- Pilot directed programming via AAG's year-round programming
- Continue to curate the general training and materials for all members

Year 3 (2025):
- Add cohorts and challenges as funding permits
- Continue directed programming, adjusting as needed after pilot year
- Continue to curate materials for all members

B. PROGRAMMING

i. Annual Meeting

Situation: The Annual Meeting continues to be the flagship event for AAG. The 2023 Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado will be the AAG's first hybrid Annual Meeting, and the intent is to utilize what we learn in 2023 to inform future meetings. From the virtual meeting format of the past several years, we know members are missing the valuable networking component that was an integral part of in-person meetings. We also recognize that revenue from the Annual Meeting is critical to the financial health of the organization, people are less willing to pay for virtual meetings, and the in-person component of hybrid meetings takes significant attention and tending by all staff.

Opportunity: We have an opportunity to reimagine and implement the next generation of the AAG Annual Meeting that leverages diverse personalized content and multiple modes of member engagement to deliver the ultimate member experience. We will create experimental structures that provide the best possible experience for all attendees regardless of modality of attendance.

Overarching Goal: AAG will expand its position as the leading North American convenor for geographers worldwide, providing high-quality Annual Meetings that bring together and empower our members, attract new members, create urgently needed pathways for knowledge sharing, coalition, and community building, and create space for the highest-quality content possible. In short, we will uphold and enhance the AAG Annual Meeting's reputation as the place to be in the world of Geography. This goal is nothing short of crucial to supporting the world community of geography scholars and practitioners as they tackle climate change, social justice and human rights, public health, and habitat protection, to name just four pressing issues. We will implement continuous quality improvement, seeking input from members to ensure we are evolving our meeting to increase membership value and meeting experience.

- Transform the current Annual Meeting to appeal to and be more inclusive of other geography disciplines (physical, professional geography, and community colleges) and member segments while retaining the current core membership
- Reduce annual meeting attendance churn from one year to the next
- Increase attendance and growth
- Create the capability to provide personalized membership experience through multiple sources of content and channels of engagement

Approach:

- Achieve the council-approved climate goals by 2025. Experiment with ways to meet these goals including piloting nodes at the 2023 meeting. Nodes are self-organized, self-supported gatherings that provide an opportunity to access Annual Meeting content. Pilot nodes in a select number of locations in 2023 and will evaluate the efficacy of the structure to determine longer-term implementation opportunities.
- Marketing and Communications – build upon the improvements from the past few years. Communicate clearly and consistently with registrants so that they are aware of details such as: the availability of recordings after the conclusion of the meeting, curated tracks, high-profile speakers, etc.
- Content curation – with the increase in Year-Round Offerings at the AAG, we have more opportunities to deliver content throughout the calendar year to meet member needs. Therefore, the Annual Meeting can be used as a space to focus on programs or audiences that the AAG has identified for community outreach or other strategic goals while also continuing to ensure a unique participation experience for students and current members. Additionally, in 2024 and beyond, we will explore developing and implementing a Program Committee that will help curate and evaluate content.
- Optimizing Meeting Retention Rates – leverage the new database to inform strategies, optimize member retention rates, and attract new audiences.

- We will maximize the value of Annual Meeting locations for strategic partnerships, sponsorships, etc. (i.e., Asia Pacific engagement at AAG2024 meeting in Honolulu.
- We will focus on virtual networking opportunities in an effort to meet the needs of all attendees.

End-2022	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Planning and implementation is underway to ensure AAG2023 is a high-quality hybrid meeting	*Jan-April – prep for AAG2023* *April – December – evolve for AAG2024*	*Jan-April – prep for AAG2024* *April – December – evolve for AAG2025*	*Jan-April – prep for AAG2025* *April – December – evolve for AAG2026*
• New conference management partner identified and onboarded	Continuous improvement: • Use what we learned from piloted nodes to plan for AAG2024 • Use what we learned from virtual experience of AAG2023 to inform AAG2024 structure and set-up.	Continuous improvement: • Use what we learned from piloted notes to plan for AAG2025 • Use what we learned from virtual experience of AAG2024 to inform AAG2025 structure and set-up.	Continuous improvement: • Use what we learned from piloted notes to plan for AAG2026 • Use what we learned from virtual experience of AAG2025 to inform AAG2026 structure and set-up.
• Nodes scoped and planned	• Identify virtual/hybrid networking goals	• Evaluate potential new structures from survey results	• Increase Meeting Retention by 10% compared to 2022
• Networking goals for AAG2023, especially for virtual portion, are identified and attended to	• All AAG systems are being used to maximum potential (we are minimizing manual processes)	• Increase Meeting Retention by 8% compared to 2022 • Attract professional/private sector geographers based on member targets	
	• Diversification of content based on audience targets	• Develop a Program Committee to help curate and evaluate content	
	• Increase Meeting Retention by 5% compared to 2022 • Attract community colleges and minority institutions based on member targets		

ii. Year-round Offerings

Situation: AAG is currently providing a robust suite of year-round offerings to a variety of audiences. Content includes traditional offerings at the Annual Meeting as well as the webinar series. While the current content is high-quality, it has not been driven by a cohesive content strategy that creates a pipeline from development through presentation to products and articulates the desired audiences, impacts, and success measures that are informed by a membership segmentation strategy.

Opportunity: To create a cohesive content strategy that articulates the desired audiences, impacts and success measures of our year-round offerings, which include virtual sessions, in-person meetings, and other events or programs. We will use member feedback and community engagement (Specialty Groups, Affinity Groups, Regions, etc.) to refine content strategy over the course of the Strategic Plan. We will build upon the core offerings already established (Jobs and Careers, Methods Trainings for Graduate Students, Media Training, etc.). We will innovate to consider other methods of content delivery to maximize member value. We will consider how to provide

members-only content that provides clear value to members and should consider how to handle non-member content in a way that may generate revenue or attract new members.

Overarching Goal: AAG will establish an on-going year-round program delivery capability and a comprehensive suite of year-round expanded and diversified programming content that retains AAG's core offerings and expands to include more focused content for target audiences (physical, professional geography and community colleges) to enable membership retention and growth for current and future membership segments. AAG will pilot different content delivery mechanisms in the spirit of innovation.

Content is delivered to the following audiences:
- Community Colleges (15%)
- Professional Geographers (15%)
- Physical Geographers (15%)
- Students/Early Career Professionals (30%)
- Department Leaders (10%)
- Other (15%)

Approach:

- Align Programming to Membership Goals - Core offerings to appeal to traditional members – career and leadership series, summer learning series (methods), advocacy series (redistricting), etc.
- Develop a "program" strategy based on the suite of offerings for specific membership segments and non-members that is aligned to defined membership strategies – Year-round program offering to Membership mapping.
- Develop an end-to-end program design, planning, development, and roll-out process that would enable efficiency and allow the team to scale in response to membership demand for more expanded and diverse content that can support retention and growth. This end-to-end process will clarify roles and enhance collaboration across the AAG staff. This process would also plan for post-webinar products suitable for membership, fundraising, and other purposes. Develop webinar calendar that provides relevant and timely content to target audiences.
- Maximize members-only content to improve member value proposition.
- Solicit feedback from target audiences or defined member segments and use a data-driven approach to identify a limited number of content areas that are relevant and timely.
- Devote resources to shaping existing content for maximum effectiveness and piloting new content delivery mechanisms (podcasts, flipped content, recorded sessions).
- Marketing and communications – develop a marketing and communications strategy to effectively promote offerings to members and generate revenue or attract new members.
- Developing revenue models to sustain and grow the offerings and to allow for non-members to engage with content while encouraging membership (let's not make it too cost prohibitive but also not so cheap that there is no incentive to become a member). Thoughtfully pilot fee for service model(s).
- Leverage existing structures of the AAG (Standing Committees, Task Forces, Specialty and Affinity Groups, Regions, etc.) to help us identify relevant and timely content areas and to support the delivery of our offerings.
- Leverage and build on collaborations with key members of the community and organizations to deliver offerings.
- Explore opportunities to reduce the number of people who register for a webinar but fail to attend. This may include surveying no-shows for input and research webinar trends to establish best practices in promotion and communication.

Timeline:

Initial Steps: Use the fall to plan and develop better systems to incorporate audience, revenue, and operational efficiency. Map year 1 offerings onto membership targets to ensure audience proportions are met. Pilot revenue and membership programs to select webinars.

Year 1 (2023): Launch programming with user surveys and tracking. Use feedback to refine Year 2 programming.

Year 2 (2024): Repeat.

Year 3 (2025): Repeat.

Membership and Programming: Programs are a prime membership benefit and generator of new member leads. Therefore, we must be holistic and deliberate in the overall types and proportions of offerings each year to match our membership goals. For example, we expect to offer a professional and leadership development series every year. Still, we consider how best to adapt these series to appeal to our core member audience and new segments. We will consider core and new segments in any given series type. Some series types will be more applicable to certain audience types than others. Therefore, we will not apply a rigid formula to series or sessions but rather consider these factors as series are developed and look across all offerings annually to ensure our overall proportions match segment goals better. For example, if we tagged every webinar with member segment appeal for the year, we could evaluate broad appeal to professional geographers as a proportion of the total. This approach helps us plan. Post webinar surveys can help us ask participants what segment they represent and whether the content was appealing as designed. We can do better pre-planning and post-assessment by overlaying membership goals onto programming. This alignment highlights the importance of programming to our organizational goals for membership retention and growth.

Fundraising: To help offset the costs of honoraria, hosting, and staff time, we will explore and pilot funding models. Reduced or free access to members creates a key member benefit. However, some series may warrant some fees, with reductions for members. Other series may appeal to new members, and we will explore models that include reduced or free attendance with a code, especially for new members. This type of programming helps expose potential members to AAG but must be accompanied by a plan to ensure high membership conversion rates. For example, we sometimes get 500 registrations for a webinar. For non-members, we ask them to establish a free Explorer account in exchange for their email. After the webinar, AAG can follow up with a membership discount option or information about upcoming programming. We anticipate some free and open webinars, some requiring fees, even for members, and other payment options. Testing these approaches will allow us to learn and grow.

C. MEMBERSHIP

Situation: Geography is a broad and varied discipline and understanding the needs of geographers and professionals in related fields will enable AAG to better serve, attract, and retain members. AAG membership has been declining over time from a peak in 2015; however, numbers rebounded last year, reaching 2001 levels. Interpretation of the cause of the decline is hindered by COVID, lack of baseline totals for all academic geographers in the US, and adequate data collection at AAG. Better member data are required to retain core members and recruit new members. AAG's traditional member benefits are professional development, career advancement, recognition, meeting, and publication and research-sharing opportunities. Since many associations offer these benefits, we are in competition for members. Additionally, AAG offers few programs and opportunities for geographers working outside of academia.

Opportunity: AAG will offer a compelling membership value proposition to geographers, students, and individuals in related fields supported by benefits and programs. We will do this by seeking to understand the needs of our members and prospective members through extensive member research to develop programs, products, and services to deliver on the value proposition. We will also leverage technology and data to identify at-risk membership segments and areas for growth. AAG worked with Green Jay Strategies in early 2022 to conduct focus groups among physical geographers, Community College faculty, and geographers working outside of academia. Insights from these conversations were shared with the AAG Council, including recommendations to recruit new members from these groups, and ideas for programs and services to offer value to these groups. Examples include suggestions that are relatively straightforward to implement, such as co-locating sessions about similar topics at the AAG Annual Meeting to facilitate networking more easily among researchers with similar interests, to more resource-intensive ideas like hosting gatherings for geographers working outside of academia in several different cities. AAG will continue to explore these recommendations and conduct more extensive member research and then conduct several pilot efforts to determine which are most effective and successful at increasing member value, and ultimately increasing overall AAG membership.

Approach: AAG will improve data collection and analysis of existing member data and expand member research efforts as we explore opportunities for membership growth both within core membership groups working in academia and among professional geographers and GIS professionals. We will also engage and foster membership among Community College faculty because they often introduce students to geography as a discipline and help bridge the transition as students become geography majors in four-year institutions.

- Understand members – market research, segmentation, analysis
- Manage membership
    - Membership model
    - End-to-end membership process
- Grow – with refined membership model, better conversion from explorer to members
- Retain – with refined membership model and ease of membership and experience
- Diversify – based on research in growth segments
- Scale – with membership technology platform for staff and members

Goals and Objectives:

- Enable members to join and renew with ease; offer multi-year and automatic membership options
- Educate and inform members about benefits and services; Implement a multichannel onboarding program by the end of 2023
- Conduct in-depth market research among members and non-members in geography and related fields to develop insights into member needs and develop a robust and sustainable membership value proposition
- Identify/validate new membership segments and development areas
- Collect in-depth demographic data and areas of interest for members and prospects

- Develop and test a new dues structure based on insights from research and environmental scan

Success Measures:

- Membership numbers increase by 5-8% over the next three years (roughly 500-800 new members, $60,000-$75,000 dues income).
- Membership retention increases to 85% at the end of three years.
- AAG identifies three segments of member growth and sets recruitment goals (low, target, stretch) for each segment in 2024. For example, we've determined that there are > 200 Community Colleges with geography programs. If we then assume that the universe of Community College geography faculty is around 500 individuals, then we could set goals of recruiting 15 (low, 3%), 25 (target, 5%), and 50 (stretch, 10%) new members in that segment. It would look different for GIS and spatial scientists where the universe of prospective members might be more like 250,000 and we might set the goals at 250 (low,.01%), 500 (target, .02%), and 750 (stretch, .03%).
- AAG offers members the ability to renew their membership automatically (autopay).
- AAG offers multi-year membership options (2-year membership, 3-year membership, 5-year membership).
- Members can articulate the benefits of membership and programs they utilize most in surveys.
- AAG has a robust demographic profile of members based on collected data.

Timeline:

Initial Steps: Much of the initial work for the membership plan would be focused on refining the membership operations and functionality to provide features like auto-renew and essential reports to demonstrate progress on the goals and objectives. For example, we will need to add fields to the database that enable us to track which of the growth segments an individual is associated with such as "physical geographer" or "non-academic geographer." We will also need to develop a new onboarding series and messaging to welcome members and educate them about their AAG membership benefits.

Year 1 (2023): Once we have the operational foundation established, we will develop and initiate campaigns to lapsed and former members. Like many associations, AAG experienced membership attrition during the pandemic. We also made significant changes to our website and the way members log into their accounts. Either or both factors may have contributed to an individual's decision not to renew, and we need to reach out to the lapsed members and invite them back. We also need to reach out to our prospective members, those who created Explorer accounts on the AAG website or connected with AAG in another way, to invite them to become members. In addition, we will formulate our research plan and begin to collect deeper insights into ways to better understand and serve current and prospective members, as well as do an environmental scan of other associations and groups to compare AAG's benefits, programs, and dues structure.

Year 2 (2024): We will refine the recruitment and retention campaigns based on the data (what is working) and continue to incentivize long-term membership commitments through auto-renew and multi-year membership packages. We will analyze the data from the member research and develop strategies based on the insights and conclusions. For example, the research may reveal that members would value a benefit that AAG already offers, but few members are aware of it and therefore it needs to be promoted or promoted in a different way. It may also reveal that there is a bigger undertaking, like a certification, that would be of value for a significant enough number of members/prospective members that it warrants program development and budgeted resources. We will identify three membership growth segments and set target recruitment goals for each based on insights from the data.

Year 3 (2025): We will continue to refine recruitment and retention campaigns based on their effectiveness, and tailor messaging to membership segments. For example, students would receive an entirely different series of onboarding messages than mid-career members and members working outside of academia would receive

messaging specific to their professional development needs. We will conduct a membership satisfaction survey to measure whether the changes we implemented had their desired effect, beyond what is visible based on membership transactions. We will increase our membership recruitment efforts at events and meetings of related groups, like AGU and Esri User Conference. We will develop options for a new membership dues structure in the event it is indicated based on the member and environmental research (i.e., are AAG's dues in line with related groups, are the membership dues tiers reflective of the membership?).

End-2022	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Technology/Retention: Complete development of Altai DB to facilitate muti-year memberships and auto-renew. Create membership dashboards and standard reports. Send renewal notices with invoice link. Develop onboarding series	Develop and execute campaigns for multi-year membership and auto-renew for new and existing members. Add fields to identify member characteristics and engagement Implement onboarding series via marketing automation Develop and implement campaigns to recruit and convert prospects	Refine multi-year membership and auto-renewal campaigns based on insights from Year 1 Refine onboarding series based on insights from Year 1	Refine multi-year membership and auto-renewal campaigns based on insights from Years 1&2 and member research insights Refine onboarding series based on insights from Years 1&2
Data: Complete import of member data (affiliations, past engagement, demographics) and add to membership join/renew workflow and onboarding.	Develop and launch campaign to encourage members to update and complete their profiles. Budget and design, and execute comprehensive member research initiative Analyze data from member research	Implement solutions and suggestions based on insights from member research Work with staff and Membership Committee to develop member value proposition based on insights from member research Develop programs and services based on insights from member research, including success metrics	Conduct annual member satisfaction survey Review and refine success metrics for programs and services
Growth: Identify prospects in DB	Develop and execute campaigns to target growth segments (Community College faculty, Professional Geographers, Physical Geographers) Conduct research among target groups to identify needs Develop and implement ongoing campaigns to recruit and convert prospects	Use insight from research to refine offerings and recruitment Identify and exhibit at key events to attract target membership groups (ex. AGU, Esri, GSA) Conduct an environmental scan of other organizations and membership and revenue projections to understand dues model risks	Offer specific programs/benefits for professional geographers, GIS professionals, Community College faculty and physical geographers Test alternative dues structure among different member segments (research and potential pilots)

D. COMMUNITY

Situation: Geography is a varied and broad discipline. This breadth is reflected in the many communities in AAG, including Departments, Regions, Specialty, and Affinity Groups. Members find value in connecting with those nearby, sharing common challenges and opportunities, and those working in the same subject matter areas. Many groups don't currently have a "home" (e.g., AP Geography teachers) and AAG is a natural fit to provide support, resources, and community. Strengthening ties within the field and connection to AAG also supports membership growth and sustainability.

Opportunity: AAG can advance the field by supporting these communities and foster engagement within and among groups by facilitating better collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and a sense of belonging. AAG can connect and engage groups across geography and related fields and serve as a hub for collaboration and networking. We will do this by fostering community within and among Specialty and Affinity groups, Regional Divisions, geography departments, AP Geography teachers, Community College faculty, GIS professionals, and ad-hoc geographer groups. Support for these groups will include mechanisms to gather and communicate in online groups/forums (such as AAG Knowledge Communities) and in person, visibility within the field, and ways to attract new members. AAG will also convene external partners to advance the field through collaborations and multidimensional initiatives.

Example: Emerging from our focus group research and in conversation with members is a common theme of the "stand-alone geographer." Whether from GIS professionals who are the only person at their organization in a GIS/data role, or professors who are a department of one, one of the voids AAG can fill is "the missing colleagues." By connecting individuals to others with similar needs and interests, AAG creates a sense of belonging, and strengthens the field by fostering the innovation and collaboration that occurs when like-minded individuals get together.

Goals and Objectives:

- Understand the needs of Specialty and Affinity groups, Regional Divisions, geography departments, AP Geography teachers, Community College faculty, GIS professionals, and ad-hoc geographer groups.
- Provide online and in person opportunities for groups to gather and collaborate.
- Establish cohort groups for stand-alone geographers in academic and professional settings. Increase interconnection between groups and AAG (e.g., making connections between the NCRGE and AAG clearer and more visible on our website so that departments/educators can be guided towards finding evidence-based education resources and an active community).
- Convene geographic community and external partners in formal and informal endeavors and initiatives (e.g., Geography Awareness Week, co-creation of webinar series).
- Standardize services (practices) and support offered to AAG community groups to ensure all groups have the resources they need to be successful.
- Define clear mechanisms for groups (e.g., Specialty Groups) to nominate Fellows and other award/honor recipients.
- Provide opportunities for individuals who are not trained as geographers but are working in geography related fields or settings to find each other and form cohorts, and avail themselves of AAG resources (e.g., AP Geography instructors).
- Collect, analyze, and issue authoritative reports on the status of geography as a discipline, especially in North America.
- Working with the Healthy Departments Committee, identify approaches as resources to help sustain and grow the pipeline of geographers.

Success Measures:

- Improved alignment, engagement, and partnership between AAG and community groups and among community groups.
- AAG groups demonstrate connection and engagement with AAG through program collaborations.
- AAG fosters local gatherings of geographers (in the US first and then globally).
- AAG offers additional SG/AG or other group affiliation types to members and nonmembers.
- SG have consistent leadership terms and election procedures.
- SG participation in Annual Meeting and year-long learning is well-defined and beneficial to SG and AAG.
- Groups are aware of AAG resources (e.g., AP Geography teachers who may not be members).
- Group representatives (e.g., Community College faculty) are recruited for AAG leadership and committee involvement.
- AAG establishes clear partnerships and MOUs with allied societies and partners (NCGE, Esri, AGI, AGS) that outline ongoing collaborations.
- Issue an annual or semi-annual report on the State of Geography in North America.
- Offer customizable toolkits for Departments, including videos and related recruitment tools.

Timeline:

Initial Steps: Review Specialty/Affinity Group and Regional Division reports, support Regional Division meetings, assess the health of the groups, and identify opportunities to provide additional support. Work with the Healthy Departments Committee to understand their goals and generate ideas for connecting with AP Geography instructors.

Year 1 (2023): Audit Specialty/Affinity Groups and Regional Divisions performance and service, and provide resources and support for networking, elections, and fundraising. Survey geography department and Community College faculty members about their challenges and develop recommendations based on that information for programs and resources that AAG could provide to those groups. Ensure that Specialty Groups and Affinity Groups are maximizing the use of the Knowledge Communities to communicate with their members. Offer Department Leadership webinar series. Recruit participants for cohort groups that connect stand-alone geographers, department chairs, and community college faculty with similar needs and challenges.

Year 2 (2024): Develop a standard set of services for all AAG-affiliated communities and devised strategies to make sure representatives from AAG communities are selected for leadership and committee service. Identify opportunities to form new communities based on our membership surveys and research and offer support to these groups as pilot programs (e.g., offer traditional member benefits to a group of non-members). Facilitate networking for all AAG community groups. Launch webinar series focused exclusively on Geography/GIS community college programs as well as webinar series for AP Geography/HS teachers.

Year 3 (2025): Refine services and offerings. Engage external groups and partners for programming and networking. Offer leadership training for AAG group leaders as a pipeline for AAG leadership and professional development opportunity.

End-2022	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Collect and analyze SG and Region reports and identify SG in need of support	Audit how existing SG are performing and serving AAG and their members Meet quarterly with all SG chairs; meet more frequently with those in need of support. Facilitate SG networking opportunities	Facilitate SG networking opportunities at Annual Meeting Add/sunset SG based on audit Standardize SG elections and leadership schedules	Implement process for SG to nominate Fellows and other award/honor recipients Develop and implement SG leadership orientation

	Facilitate SG fundraising and awards.		
Support Regional meetings through event logistics and attendance	Audit how Regions are performing and serving AAG and their members. Meet quarterly with Regional Division leaders Connect Regional Division Councilors and Leaders to each other within and across regions. Facilitate Regional Division elections	Develop and implement standard set of services and programs for Regional Divisions	
Connect with Healthy Departments Committee about goals and recommendations	Survey geography departments about needs and challenges and develop recommendations	Implement programs and services based on recommendation/insights from Survey	Refine programs and services. Conduct annual survey and data collection.
Identify and update contact information for geography faculty at Community Colleges	Survey Community College faculty about needs and challenges and develop recommendations	Implement recommendations from Survey Launch webinar series focused exclusively on Geography/GIS community college programs	Offer Summit for Community College faculty
Identify AP Geography teachers	Connect with AP Geography teachers and offer (existing) resources Develop programs for AP Geography teachers	Deliver webinar series for AP Geography/HS teachers Develop community platform for AP Geography teachers	Offer special membership category or certification for AP Geography teachers Invite AP Geography teachers to community platform

E. ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

i. Governance

Situation: As AAG has grown over the years, we are keeping up with the changing requirements on our volunteer leadership and our governance structure, processes, and tools. This is all part of our on-going effort to improve the overall smooth running of AAG as a member association in the service of our members and our mission.

Opportunity: Under the current strategic plan, we have started to perform the requisite Governance Audit and will continue to define appropriate recommendations for updates of our policies, bylaws, and governance processes. This effort will enhance the governance effectiveness of AAG volunteer leadership to cultivate, recruit and on-board AAG leaders. This effort is intended to support our volunteers throughout the Association, in Specialty and Affinity Groups, Regional Divisions, Committees, and the governing Council. Establishing clear expectations, defining roles and responsibilities, managing the charges and mandates of committees and task forces, designating staff liaisons as appropriate, will ensure the best possible experience for our volunteer leaders as they serve the best interests of the AAG and gain valuable professional experience that furthers their careers.

Overarching goal: We plan to cultivate generations of AAG leaders in increasingly responsible volunteer positions at the Association, ensuring that the organization is led by engaged, knowledgeable member-leaders who have the best interests of the AAG at heart as they set the overall vision and strategy for the Association. The AAG plans to outline a trajectory of service more clearly within the Association beginning with student and early career involvement in our Specialty and Affinity Groups, to service on our committees, in special task forces, in our Regional Divisions, and eventually as elected AAG leaders on the Council. To achieve this, AAG staff will facilitate more and better communication with our various communities of volunteers (e.g., quarterly meetings with Group Chairs, more frequent communication with Regional Boards and committee or task force chairs, etc.), ensure smoother transitions between incoming and outgoing officers, and provide responsive service to our many volunteer leaders.

Timeline:

Year 1 (2023): AAG will continue to update/refresh its existing Council governance policies and manuals as needed. AAG will also update its guidance to Specialty/Affinity Groups and Regional Boards to support these volunteers more effectively in their service.

Year 2 (2024): AAG staff will review committee charges collaboratively with committee members and discuss possible tweaks or changes to ensure committees are working effectively and in synch with the Association's overarching mission and goals.

Year 3 (2025): AAG will carry out a review of the functions and effectiveness of its many volunteer entities and propose solutions or improvements where needed.

End-2022	Year 1 - 2023	Year 2 - 2024	Year 3 - 2025	Success Measures
Complete first Phase of Governance Audit (Candida, Amanda):	*Review AAG Committees and their performance / engagement; Candida, Gary*	• *Implement new Committee engagement process Candida, Gary* • *Review AAG Council skill sets and whether they match the organization's needs (e.g., diversity of disciplinary/managerial/sector expertise to lead AAG effectively). Candida, Gary*	*Implement new Council recruiting criteria with Nominating Committee (Candida)*	• Quality of Council is reflected in the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's functioning.
• Revised Bylaws out for member review/adoption	• Identify which need more guidance from HQ. Assign staff liaisons. Gary, Chiefs	• Candida and AAG staff liaisons work with Committees and report back to Gary	• Survey Committees and Council on revised processes, identify possible improvements. Candida, Gary	• Effective adoption of by Bylaws and feedback from Council
• Policies reviewed and approved by AAG Council	• Outline a formal engagement process for all AAG Committees (e.g., new committee? Reactivate existing structure = Ex. Comm.?) Candida, Gary	• Develop additional criteria for expertise needed on Council and present to Council for approval. Candida, Gary		• Effective adoption of Committee charges and procedures by AAG Committees
• Remaining Councilor/Officer Roles reviewed and approved by Council				
• Council Handbook used at Sept. Orientation				

ii. Continuous Operations Improvement

Situation: Under the last strategic plan, we have begun to upgrade the underlying technology infrastructure of AAG, starting with overhauls of the membership database and the AAG website. As part of this on-going process, in 2023 we will continue to address the AAG's technology by developing a Technology Strategic Plan to ensure that the appropriate upgrades are scheduled in a timely manner to improve our platforms and our ability to expand and improve the quality of our member offerings and the tools staff use to serve our members.

Opportunity: We have upgraded our database, website, and delivery platforms to provide improved membership experience for join/renew, our annual meetings, events, and webinars. We will continue to make planned technological improvements and upgrades to ensure that our IT infrastructure is up to date. We will invest in appropriate user training for our system admins and staff to ensure optimal adoption of all our new technology tools. We will also regularly audit all our systems' performance and security, ensuring proper compliance and optimal health of our systems. In addition, we plan to regularly survey our members and users, to ascertain whether our systems are serving our audience as desired.

Overarching Goal: To accomplish successful adoption of all new IT systems at AAG, audit our needs vs. our platforms, identify gaps and develop a Technology Strategic Plan to address them. The Technology Strategic Plan will ensure AAG is making the best use of its systems, auditing its evolving needs, and staying abreast of industry upgrades and best practices to ensure AAG is using the right systems to achieve its best-in-class member service goals. The Core Technology Team at the AAG (composed of Chiefs, Operations, Events, and Design staff) will carry out a continuous cyclical process of revision of our operations and encouraging the adoption of practices or tools to improve the AAG's services to its members. This cyclical review is intended to support the culture change underway at the AAG, as it transitions to being a more member-focused organization striving to provide best-in-class services and experiences to its members and event attendees.

Timeline:

Year 1 (2023): AAG will carry out a technology gap analysis, develop a 3-year Technology Strategic Plan, and begin implementing Year 1 goals from that plan.

Year 2 (2024): AAG will carry out an annual audit of its systems and how they serve staff/member needs, review possible new systems or tools to continue improving its functions and services, continue training and developing staff capacity to make the best use of all the resources available to them.

Year 3 (2025): Repeat and improve on Y2 activities.