

ASPA Organizational Primer

Introduction

Attendees of ASPA's 2nd Chapter/Section Leaders Discussion Forum, held on March 17, 2003, requested a simple organizational guide to help them better understand the relationships between chapters, sections, the national leadership and the ASPA staff.

This document attempts to blend legal responsibilities, drawn from ASPA's Policies and Procedures Manual, with straight-forward descriptions. At the end, you will find a list of Frequently Asked Questions with answers prepared by the ASPA staff.

We intend this to serve as a living document that will evolve with the association.

ASPA's Legal Status

Established in 1939, ASPA was conceived by its founders as a professional/educational organization created for the mutual benefit of its members, ergo, "Society." ASPA was incorporated in the State of Illinois on September 13, 1945 and is registered as a "foreign corporation" in the District of Columbia. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has conferred 501(c)(3) status upon ASPA, signifying:

- ASPA's purpose is professional and educational (as opposed to trade or charitable).
- ASPA is limited and restricted in lobbying, carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. ASPA is absolutely prohibited from political activities, such as supporting/opposing a particular candidate. It cannot participate or intervene in any way in political campaigns.
- Contributions to ASPA qualify as a tax deduction for donors.
- ASPA must pay Unrelated Business Income Tax on unrelated income (e.g., advertising revenue).
- Chapters and sections are subunits of ASPA in the eyes of IRS - they fall under ASPA's Group Exemption, and each has a Federal Tax ID number that is different from ASPA's.
- ASPA is liable for debts incurred by any part of the organization. Therefore ASPA policies require that the ASPA Executive Director sign or approve all contracts for any part of ASPA (e.g., chapters and sections).

National Governance

National Council

ASPA's National Council has always served a governance role. Contested elections for Council seats have been held since the early 1970s. For more than twenty years, ASPA conducted annual elections in ten electoral regions. Members in these regions were represented by three individuals serving rotating three-year terms. These representatives served as the members' voice for members and were responsible for communicating with chapter officers within the respective regions. Chapter assignments were divided amongst the representatives by the senior representative in each region.

During this period, ASPA members also elected three at-large representatives, who assumed the responsibility of communicating with the Society's section leaders. Each year, the senior at-large representative made section liaison assignments.

In 1998, the National Council adopted a new strategic plan and ASPA's members voted to approve a new set of bylaws the following July. Language in the bylaws eliminated the ten regions and replaced them with five larger electoral districts. The at-large Council representative positions were also eliminated. These changes reduced the Council number from 42 to 21. The new district representatives assumed the responsibility of serving as both chapter and section liaisons.

National Council

- (a) ASPA is governed by a National Council composed of nineteen voting members and two non-voting members.
- (b) The voting members are the President, the President-Elect, the Vice-President, three members from each of the five districts elected for three-year overlapping terms, and a representative of the Conference of Minority Public Administrators (COMPMA).
- (c) The non-voting members are the most recent Past-President and the Parliamentarian appointed by the President.
- (d) The officers of ASPA are the President, the President-Elect, the Vice President, and the Secretary-Treasurer (who shall be the officer known as the Executive Director).
- (e) The President serves for a term of one year.
- (f) The President-Elect automatically succeeds to the office of the President upon completion of the President's term. The Vice-President, elected by the members of the Society by annual ballot for a term of one year, will automatically succeed to the office of President-Elect upon completion of the President-Elect's term.

Source: ASPA Policies and Procedures Manual, Chapter 2

[Note: Originally established as an ASPA affiliate, COMPMA became an ASPA section in 1977. In the early 1970s three ASPA affiliates existed: COMPMA, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and the Women's Task Force. NASPAA became an independent organization and the Women's Task Force eventually ceased operations. COMPMA maintains its National Council seat because of its original affiliate status.]

On March 14, 2001, the Council adopted a "Statement of National Council Member Responsibilities." This document set forth several liaison responsibilities:

- Collectively developing approaches to maintaining contact with ASPA's membership and ensuring that ASPA members are heard by the Council
- Individually actively supporting the goals of ASPA and representing the goals and objectives of ASPA to members and others
- Individually maintaining contact with constituents to ensure that those members' interests are heard by the Council. More specifically, Council members are expected to:
 - Maintain regular contact with assigned chapters or sections to obtain input on the direction ASPA should be taking, inform them about Council actions, and ensure that they are receiving support from ASPA
 - Visit as many chapters as possible in one's District

- Support and attend conferences held in your District by ASPA entities (the three District representatives share the responsibility to ensure that each conference has a National Council representative in attendance)

The National Council meets semiannually, at the ASPA National Conference held during the spring and during the ASPA Midyear Meetings held in November or December. Council members cast the final votes on items of organizational business (e.g., proposed section dues or applications from prospective chapters). The ASPA Executive Committee, consisting of the ASPA officers and the Executive Director, meets monthly via conference call and can approve action items when the Council is not in session.

ASPA's National Council members are legally stewards of the assets of the organization, responsible for defining the direction of ASPA, monitoring the staff, managing the Society's resources effectively, and assuring that the organization has adequate resources to carry out its mission.

Steering Groups and Action Teams

In addition to electoral changes, the 1998 Strategic Plan also modified the organizational focus of the Society. ASPA adopted three broad strategic goals and established three steering groups to implement the goals of the plan. Non-standing national committees were eliminated, and their work assumed by action teams reporting to the Steering Groups.

Steering Groups

- (a) Steering groups will be established to achieve the three goals of Performance, Pride, and Capacity to insure that ongoing projects and/or functions are accomplished.
- (b) Each steering group will consist of three to five people appointed by the president for staggered two-year terms to ensure continuity, with the option of being reappointed for one more term by a subsequent president.
- (c) Steering groups will report directly to the Council.

Action Teams

- (a) Action teams will be established by each steering group to perform specific tasks with set expiration dates.
- Action teams will report to the Steering Groups.

Source: ASPA Policies and Procedures Manual, Chapter 2

Steering Group 3 (Capacity) accepted responsibility for organizational concerns, such as chapters, sections and membership. Steering Group 3 reviews all proposals from chapters and sections and recommends the ones it endorses to the National Council (or the Executive Committee when the Council is not in session).

Publications Committee

ASPA's Publications Committee reviews new and existing section-sponsored journals. By ASPA policy, the Committee review section journals every five years. The primary obligation, however, for insuring the quality of periodicals affiliated with ASPA through its sections rests with the section leadership – the Chair and Executive Committee. It is their obligation to obtain

annual reports from the journal editor, and to prepare and submit the five year review to the Publications Committee.

The Publications Committee submits all recommendations to Steering Group 1 (Performance), which can then refer action items to the National Council (or the Executive Committee when the Council is not in session).

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is a standing committee of the ASPA National Council. Among its many responsibilities, the Finance Committee develops the annual budget of the Society and reviews proposed section dues increases.

Staff

Executive Director

The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the Society and is responsible for executing Society business. The Executive Director manages the national office to provide the support and services needed to the National Council and membership. The Executive Director recruits, appoints, develops and removes employees. The Executive Director often accepts requests for speaking engagements at chapter- and section-sponsored events.

Chapter, Section and e-Organization Development

This department provides technical assistance to chapters and sections, both via direct communication and the monthly chapter/section e-newsletter, PAL. It also maintains the ASPA web site, which features chapter and section categories. The online “Chapter Toolbox” and “Section Toolbox” contain templates, manuals, helpful hints and other miscellaneous documents. On occasion, the department conducts chapter/section leader training sessions across the country.

Member Services and Database Management

This department maintains ASPA’s member database and e-aspa, the Society’s member-only web site. It conducts the annual fall student membership promotion and sends membership literature to interested chapters and sections. Special requests for rosters and mailing lists should be directed to this department.

Finance Department

ASPA’s Finance Department plays two important roles with respect to chapters and sections. First, it remits annual rebate checks to chapters and quarterly rebate checks to sections. Second, it serves as contact point for ASPA’s organizational insurance. ASPA provides chapters and sections with malfeasance and liability insurance. ASPA also carries insurance for events sponsored by chapters and sections. Certificates of insurance are available upon request.

Communications Department

In addition to designing various ASPA forms and brochures, ASPA’s Communications Department produces *PA TIMES*, the Society’s monthly newspaper. *PA TIMES* accepts articles and pictures from chapters and sections for its ASPA TIMES segment. Each ASPA section and

chapter is eligible to receive the equivalent of a one-half page advertisement per calendar year in *PA TIMES*.

Chapters

ASPA's local chapters play a primary role in promoting face-to-face interaction within the Society.

In the mid-1990s, ASPA's Chapter Development Committee published a handbook to assist new chapter officers. Many of its recommendations remain pertinent today (see below).

Chapter Organization

The chapter constitution and bylaws determine how a chapter is organized and managed. Typically, the constitution will specify the chapter's officers, the composition of the council or board of directors, if one is deemed necessary, and the committee structure. In addition, the bylaws will usually include the authority and primary responsibilities of each position, as well as the relationship between them. The means by which these positions are filled, either through election or appointment, will also be included in the constitution.

Chapter Officers

At a minimum, each chapter should elect a president, president-elect or vice president, depending on the preference of the chapter, and a secretary/treasurer. The size and nature of a chapter and the impact on officers' responsibilities may warrant consideration of additional officers, (i.e. a split of the secretary/treasurer's responsibilities into two offices and/or the creation of additional vice presidents or committee chairs to handle particular matters such as membership or programs or to represent specific interests, geographic or otherwise, within the chapter).

Chapter Board of Directors

The constitution and/or by-laws should clarify how and in what manner the council will be organized. Flexibility is essential so that individual assignments can be made which provide for the best use of time and talents of the council members. It is more important for a council to organize around what it plans to accomplish and try to fill slots accordingly. The size and organization of the council will depend on the size of the chapter, geographical area to be served, and other considerations which the chapter regards as important. Generally, a chapter may find it wise to include a provision in its constitution designed to encourage a balance of representation regarding such factors as age, gender, ethnicity, level of government, geographical area, functional occupation, and organizational association. The constitution should also specify the method by which council members are elected and the rules under which the council will operate.

Committee Structure

The president of the chapter is also responsible for appointing chapter members to committees. Committees, whether they are ad hoc or standing, can be a great asset since they can help stimulate thinking and facilitate sharing the workload. Sometimes committees do not function as such because much of the work falls to one person. Every effort should be made to prevent this from occurring.

Chapter Financial Responsibility

Chapter Compliance

Rebates can only be transmitted to chapters that are in compliance with ASPA policies. Those policies stipulate that each chapter must:

- (a) Submit an annual financial reporting form, including a statement of audit or review findings;
- (b) Submit an annual list of officers; and
- (c) Have officers who are current ASPA members.

Financial Reporting to the ASPA Office

(a) Each year, all chapters are required to submit certain financial information to the ASPA office. The forms, which are provided by the ASPA office, include the Chapter Officers Information Form (due as soon as possible following officer elections), and the Chapter Financial Information Form (to be submitted no later than 60 days after the close of the chapter's fiscal year). In many cases, there is a change in chapter officers at the time the information is due in the ASPA office. Outgoing officer(s), whose term the reporting period covers, should complete and file the information.

(b) Chapter rebates will be withheld until these reports and information are received by the national office.

Financial Responsibility

(a) Any and all liabilities incurred by the Chapter are the sole responsibility of the Chapter.

(b) Payment of rebates will be withheld from the Chapter for noncompliance with reporting requirements. Payment will also be withheld if the Executive Director does not find the financial report acceptable, the chapter's officers are not ASPA members, or the chapter's membership programs violate ASPA's Bylaws or Council-adopted policy.

(c) The Society's liability for chapter rebates is limited to 12/31 of the year following the call for chapter information, with an appeals process.

(d) Any amounts due to the national organization for a period exceeding ninety days will be deducted from the next regularly scheduled rebate of any Chapter with such outstanding debt.

(e) The Chapter will discuss with the ASPA Executive Director any intention to enter into a contract or incur a liability or anticipated liability in an amount exceeding \$5,000.

Source: ASPA Policies and Procedures Manual, Chapter 6

Sections

First established in the 1970s, ASPA's sections have served to bridge a generalist public administration organization with a field becoming more specialized and diverse. A generation ago, ASPA stalwarts such as Dwight Waldo expressed concern about the proliferation of sections. (Pugh, 1988) Yet with more than 6,000 combined memberships, ASPA's special-focus sections provide value to a significant portion of the Society's populations.

When ASPA was established in 1939 only a handful of public administration associations existed. Today, more than 400 such associations exist, and new ones are formed each year. On the one hand ASPA's sections face external competition from these associations; on the other hand the existence of these sections enhances the value of ASPA's overall membership benefit package.

Consequently, some sections have experienced an identity crisis, attempting to develop a national identity while being overshadowed by the parent association. This has manifested itself in

several ways, including recent attempts to develop section membership packages with limited ASPA benefits.

By sponsoring conferences and publications, sections have made a significant long-term contribution to ASPA and the profession. Many ASPA sections sponsor or co-sponsor journals. Since membership dues are less expensive than individual journal subscriptions, sections with quality journals have been able to attract significant numbers of members. For many sections, the journal is the only tangible membership benefit (a strength as well as a weakness). Sections have also sharpened the focus of *PA TIMES* by suggesting monthly themes related to topical issues.

Here is a list of ASPA's twenty sections (dates of establishment in parentheses):

- Association on Budgeting and Financial Management (1979)
- Conference of Minority Public Administrators (1977)
- Section on Criminal Justice Administration (1974)
- Section on Emergency and Crisis Management (1986)
- Section on Environmental and Natural Resources Administration (1976)
- Section on Ethics (1997)
- Section on Health and Human Service Administration (1974)
- Section on Historical, Artistic and Reflective Expression (1992)
- Section on Intergovernmental Administration and Management (1979)
- Section on International and Comparative Administration (1973)
- Section on Public Performance and Management (1975)
- National Young Professionals Forum (1983)
- Section on Personnel Administration and Labor Relations (1981)
- Section for Professional and Organization Development (1975)
- Section on Public Administration Education (1979)
- Section on Public Administration Research (1989)
- Section on Public Law and Administration (1990)
- Section on Science and Technology in Government (1976)
- Section on Transportation and Public Administration (1992)
- Section for Women in Public Administration (1984)

Section Performance and Financial Responsibility

Performance Criteria

Each section is responsible for meeting the following performance standards set by ASPA's National Council:

- (a) written communication regarding activity with section membership at least semi-annually, the nature and substance of which is to be determined by the section leadership;
- (b) submission annually of a listing of appointed and elected leadership;
- (c) financial accountability as determined by the National Council with submission of an annual financial statement;
- (d) submission of an annual report, completed on a standardized form, by the outgoing section chair by June 30 of each year;
- (e) conduct of elections periodically, but not less frequently than every two years; and

- (f) achieve and maintain a membership of at least one (1) percent of ASPA's total membership.

Rebate Calculation

The rebates are based on a per capita dollar amount per section member. Section treasurers will be able to multiply the number of members and the dollars per capita to determine their total rebate for the year month. The dollar amount per member will be set by the section and the Finance Committee and the National Council ASPA will retain a \$4.00 processing fee per section member.

Section Compliance

Rebates can only be transmitted to sections that are in compliance with ASPA policies. Those policies stipulate that each section must:

- (a) Submit an annual financial information form;
- (b) Submit an annual list of officers who are current ASPA members;
- (c) Submit an annual work plan for the coming year; and
- (d) Submit an annual report on the past year.

Financial Reporting to the ASPA Office

- (a) Each year, all sections are required to submit certain financial information to the ASPA office. The forms, which are provided by the ASPA office, include the Section Officers Reporting Form (due as soon as possible following officer elections), the Section Financial Information Form (to be submitted no later than 60 days after the close of the chapter's fiscal year), the Annual Report on the past year, and the Annual Work Plan for the coming year. In many cases, there is a change in section officers at the time the information is due in the ASPA office. Outgoing officer(s), whose term the reporting period covers, should complete and file the information. The incoming section chair should complete the Annual Work Plan.
- (b) Section rebates will be withheld until these reports and information are received by the national office.

Financial Responsibility

- (a) Any and all liabilities incurred by the section are the sole responsibility of the section.
- (b) Payment of rebates will be withheld from the section for noncompliance with reporting requirements. Payment will also be withheld if the Executive Director does not find the financial report, annual report, and the work plan acceptable, the section's officers are not ASPA members, or the section's membership programs violate ASPA's Bylaws or Council-adopted policy.
- (c) The Society's liability for section rebates is limited to 12/31 of the year following the call for section information, with an appeals process.
- (d) Any amounts due to the national organization for a period exceeding ninety days will be deducted from the next regularly scheduled rebate of any section with such outstanding debt.
- (e) The section will discuss with the ASPA Executive Director any intention to enter into a contract or incur a liability or anticipated liability in an amount exceeding \$5,000.

Source: ASPA Policies and Procedures Manual, Chapter 7

University-Based Affiliates

In June 2002 ASPA approved a policy to grant affiliate status to university-based groups, such as public administration student clubs, public administration honor societies, etc. It is ASPA's hope and intent that these affiliations, when established in areas with existing chapters, will help to bring both groups together for joint programs, activities and networking. And, that when established in areas without existing chapters, will allow a new base for ASPA support, fellowship, and networking. Affiliation will benefit the affiliate, the chapter, and the organization as a whole.

The affiliate holds the following responsibilities:

- a) Must adopt a constitution in accordance with the guidelines in the ASPA Chapter Handbook, abide by ASPA's bylaws, policies, and procedures as listed in such documents as the ASPA Constitution and Bylaws, the ASPA Policy and Procedures Manual, the ASPA Chapter Handbook, and all other like policy and documents current and future pertaining to chapters, and must file annual reporting forms in accordance with ASPA guidelines and policy for chapters;
- b) Must hold no less than 10 members in its first year, and no less than 15 thereafter, and all members of the affiliate must be members of ASPA;
- c) Must submit an application in accordance with the model University-Based Group Application for ASPA Affiliation;
- d) May be subject to the rules and regulations of the institution at which it is based, must obtain some degree of funding directly from the institution, and as such, affiliates are the legal subordinates of the institution.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Our section's board has discussed increasing dues by \$2 per year. What steps do we need to take to receive national approval?

A: Once your section has ratified a proposed dues increase (via a vote of the board or the membership), you will need to submit your proposal with supplementary documentation to Steering Group 3 (Capacity) and the ASPA Finance Committee. Upon approval by both bodies, Steering Group 3 will bring forward your proposal to the ASPA National Council (or the ASPA Executive Committee when the Council is not in session).

Q: Our section has entered into a tentative agreement with a publisher to sponsor a journal. We will need to raise dues by \$16 per year to cover the journal's costs. What steps do we need to take to receive national approval?

A: You will first need to submit a formal proposal to the ASPA Publication Committee, which can endorse your agreement to Steering Group 1 (Performance). As with the example above, you will need to secure the approval of Steering Group 3 (Capacity) and the ASPA Finance Committee. Upon approval by the bodies listed above, Steering Group 3 will bring forward your proposal to the ASPA National Council (or the ASPA Executive Committee when the Council is not in session).

Q: This year, our chapter would like to run two one-quarter page advertisements instead of our free one-half page ad in *PA TIMES*. Can we do this?

A: Yes, but please contact ASPA's Communications Department in advance of publication, because space is limited in each issue.

Q: Our new university-based affiliate would like to set up a bank account. Can ASPA help us get a Federal Tax ID number?

A: Technically, only chapters and sections are considered to be subunits of ASPA. Check with the business office at your host university to determine which Federal Tax ID number to use.