



ASSOCIATION FOR  
PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS  
& MANAGEMENT

## **Review of APPAM's 2011 Strategic Plan and Recommendations for the 2015 Strategic Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

At the November 2011 meeting of the Policy Council, the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) adopted a four-year strategic plan, formally titled “Building on APPAM’s Strengths: Strategic Objectives and Recommendations of the Strategic Planning Committee,” for 2012 through 2015. Anticipating a review and evaluation of the “2011 Strategic Plan,” in spring 2014 an ad hoc strategic planning committee recommended a process to follow and topics for a committee to consider in developing a subsequent strategic plan for 2016-2020. This report contains our review and evaluation of the results to date of the 2011 Strategic Plan and our recommendations for goals and strategies APPAM might follow to meet those goals during the next five years – the “2015 Strategic Plan.”

The charge to the 2015 strategic planning committee was to review the existing goals of the 2011 Strategic Plan, determine how well each had been met, commend what has been done to accomplish goals and suggest actions for goals that have not yet been met, and recommend new goals that arose in discussions with APPAM members as part of the review process. The three primary goals of the 2011 Strategic Plan were:

- Increase the policy relevance of our research and interactions between policy makers and practitioners;

- Create greater integration across disciplinary, methodological, topical, and academic/practitioner silos; and
- Expand active membership and increase membership diversity across gender, race and ethnicity, academic/practitioner status, and disciplinary backgrounds.

The plan also had recommendations related to three operational issues: collaborations with other organizations, curriculum building related to PhD and masters degree programs, and operational/governance of the Association.

Our review and evaluation of the 2011 Strategic Plan indicates that the following activities are working well:

- Changes to the governance structure designed to enhance its ability to meet the goals of the Association, including expanding the committee structure to include separate committees for Membership, Diversity, and Policy Relevance;
- Development of opportunities to engage policy makers and practitioners in a more “virtual” manner;
- Efforts to expand membership and involve more younger members and students in the Fall Research Conference and Association leadership roles;
- *JPAM*'s new editor, Kenneth Couch, has made some changes already to the journal and its impact ranking remains very high.

Despite the success of these actions and efforts towards meeting the 2011 Plan goals, we believe further efforts are needed for the Association to address key components of the goals of creating greater integration across interest silos and increasing our active membership and its diversity:

- Expand the racial/ethnic diversity of the “academic pipeline” and student bodies of our academic institutional members;
- Increase the disciplinary diversity of members and policy issues that are discussed at the Fall Research Conference; and
- Develop and manage relationships, including jointly sponsored conferences, with international organizations that focus on public policy issues relevant to APPAM's members.

The goals of the proposed 2015 Strategic Plan reinforce the previous strategic goals and support the continued work of the Policy Council committees, yet reflect the concerns and issues that the committee has identified as needing further efforts.

The proposed 2015 Strategic Plan identifies three primary goals:

- Promote the discipline of public policy analysis and management, and foster the professional development of people with degrees and interests in policy analysis and public management;
- Continue efforts to both increase the policy relevance of the Association's members' research and expand interactions between researchers and policy makers, including focusing on state and local concerns; and
- Expand efforts to create a more diverse membership – with attention especially to race/ethnicity, academic discipline and policy interests, including policy issues with which other countries also are struggling.

Submitted by the 2015 Strategic Planning Committee

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# **Review of APPAM's 2011 Strategic Plan and Recommendations for the 2015 Strategic Plan**

## **Introduction**

In November 2011, APPAM adopted a four-year strategic plan, formally titled “Building on APPAM’s Strengths: Strategic Objectives and Recommendations of the Strategic Planning Committee,” for 2012 through 2015.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, an ad hoc committee recommended a process for reviewing and evaluating the “2011 Strategic Plan,” and the Policy Council subsequently established the 2015 Strategic Planning Committee. The charge to the 2015 Strategic Planning Committee was to review the goals of the 2011 Strategic Plan, determine how well they had been met and endorse those that should continue to be goals, and recommend new goals that arose in discussions with Association members as part of the review process. This report and new strategic plan (the “2015 Strategic Plan”) are the result of evaluating the effects of the 2011 Strategic Plan and our recommendations for strategies APPAM should follow during the next five years.

Our report has three major sections. In section I, we present our evaluation of the progress of the Association towards meeting the goals of the 2011 Strategic Plan. In section II, we discuss issues and themes for the revised goals and new goals that emerged from the member survey and in-depth interviews. In section III, we present our recommendations for addressing these goals over the next five years (2016–2020) – the “2015 Strategic Plan.”

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<sup>1</sup> Please see [http://www.appam.org/assets/1/7/Building\\_on\\_APPAMs\\_Strengths.pdf](http://www.appam.org/assets/1/7/Building_on_APPAMs_Strengths.pdf) and [http://www.appam.org/assets/1/7/Full\\_Strategic\\_Planning\\_Committee\\_Report.pdf](http://www.appam.org/assets/1/7/Full_Strategic_Planning_Committee_Report.pdf)  
The 2011 Strategic Plan was the first formal adoption of objectives for the Association since the late 1980s and very early 1990s. The Association now plans to evaluate its strategic plan every five years and establish new goals as well as recommendations for meeting prior goals that may not have been fully met.

## **I. 2011 Strategic Plan: Review of Progress Made**

Any evaluation of progress towards goals of a strategic plan has to recognize that such a plan is a blueprint to help an organization organize its resources and prioritize objectives to meet its mission. Moreover, while strategic plans usually are created for a specific time-frame, it is the rare plan that contains goals that can all be achieved within the time-frame. Paraphrasing Robert Behn,<sup>2</sup> leaders and managers cannot develop the perfect plan from the beginning. They have to experiment with initiatives to determine what works and what does not. Our evaluation was conducted with this point in mind – and the expectation that APPAM will need to revise its strategic plan every five years as we learn which initiatives are successful and as our goals change in response to successes and shifts in perceived needs.

In reviewing the progress made with the goals of the 2011 Strategic Plan, we relied on data the Association has collected about membership and presenters at the Fall conference; actions taken by the leadership; and responses to the on-line survey of APPAM members that we conducted in March, focus group discussions with the Institutional Representatives and Policy Council members in April, and in-depth interviews that we conducted with thirty people who represent a cross-section of active current and prior leaders of the Association as well as younger members and people at member institutions who no longer regularly attend APPAM conferences.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a strategic plan Scorecard was created by former President Paul Decker and Executive Director Tara Sheehan to illustrate how well the goals were being met and whether various specific efforts were having their intended effects related to the goals. The scorecard was created to help the association's leadership keep track of various

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Behn: "Management by Groping Along," *JPAM*, 7(4):643-663 (1988).

<sup>3</sup> The on-line survey, conducted in March, had a 29% response rate. We held four focus group discussions, lasting 45 to 60 minutes each, with Institutional Representatives and Policy Council members who were at the Spring meeting. We are grateful to them and the thirty individuals, most of whom have long ties to APPAM, who graciously provided thoughtful answers to in-depth interviews in the Spring of 2015.

efforts to meet the 2011 Plan goals.<sup>4</sup> We also found the scorecard useful in our evaluation of the Association's progress with the goals. As the scorecard indicates with green, yellow or red shadings of boxes, some of the goals are being met while others need continued effort.

The 2011 Strategic Plan has three major goals:

- Increase the policy relevance of our research and interactions between policy makers and practitioners;
- Create greater integration across disciplinary, methodological, topical, and academic/practitioner silos; and
- Expand active membership and increase membership diversity across gender, race and ethnicity, academic/practitioner status, and disciplinary backgrounds.

In addition, three "Other Issues" were raised in the longer version of the 2011 Strategic Plan as operational objectives or areas that would be beneficial for the Association to pursue:

- Increase efficiency and responsibility related to the operations and governance of the Association, particularly with respect to responsibilities of Policy Council members and with respect to balancing the need for expanding APPAM staff with budget constraints;
- Explore opportunities for collaborations with other professional organizations; and
- Foster occasions for institutional members to engage in curriculum building related to PhD programs and especially to masters degree programs.

### ***Goals That Have Had Substantial Progress***

Our review indicates that substantial progress has been made in addressing three goals and "other" issues:

1. Changes to the governance structure of APPAM, particularly the downsizing of the Policy Council and engaging its members in substantive committee work. The Policy

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<sup>4</sup> A copy of the scorecard is included in the APPAM Annual Report 2014.

Council approved two of the 2011 Strategic Plan's governance structure recommendations in November 2011: the establishment of a new committee structure and participation guidelines for Policy Council Members. Six new ad hoc committees were formed; in the future such committees may become standing committees (i.e., changes to the bylaws would have to be made to convert them to standing committees). Ad hoc committees have to be reconstituted annually by the APPAM President but the expectation with these committees was that they would exist through at least 2015 (the years of the 2011 Strategic Plan). Four new committees were created specifically to address the goals of the 2011 Strategic Plan:

- Membership (to develop membership recruitment plans and priorities, develop new membership benefits as appropriate, reach out to underserved members, and so forth);
- Diversity (to promote diversity in the Association's membership, at its member schools, and in its leadership);
- Communications/Website (to determine the most appropriate vehicles and methods through which APPAM communicates with its members, oversee the APPAM website operation, assist in creating newsletters, and so forth); and
- Committee on Policy Relevance (responsible for determining how best to increase the exposure of APPAM research to policymakers and program operators, and expand the knowledge of APPAM members about research topics that policymakers find important).

The new committee structure and participation guidelines are intended to promote greater leadership responsibility among the Policy Council members.<sup>5</sup> Along with these changes, the APPAM staff now includes a new Director of Communications, and two well-qualified people have joined the staff since 2014, greatly enhancing the office operations of the Association. The progress that has been made in meeting the goals and issues we highlight here is due in large part to the new committees and the revamped governance structure of APPAM.

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<sup>5</sup> Committees also are expected to provide annual reports of their activities to the Policy Council to ensure that committee responsibilities are taken seriously.

2. Development of opportunities to engage policy makers and practitioners in a more “virtual” manner. Since launching the 2011 Strategic Plan and creating the new committees, APPAM has taken concrete steps to better highlight its activities for interested policy makers, people implementing programs, and its own members. In particular, the recent addition of a Director of Communications, has raised the visibility of the activities of APPAM, its members, and member institutions. Progress clearly has been made in creating the capacity to have a larger digital presence and increase the online presence of the association. All aspects of conferences have moved in a digital direction including the availability of a conference program online via a dedicated application, podcasts of selected events from conferences, and the launch of a web site for best papers from the Fall Research Conference. Additionally, a process has been developed to create standard content drawn from each paper published in *JPAM* for the web site and to solicit a podcast related to the article from the authors. As with many activities, success seems to breed desires for more such efforts, which we interpret as a positive sign. The feedback from a variety of interview and focus group participants is that the Association should continue to consider additional online activities that might engage its members and external policy makers and practitioners.

A quite different initiative to increase APPAM’s visibility among policy makers is the annual APPAM Exemplar Award (first awarded at the 2013 Fall conference). The APPAM Exemplar Award recognizes outstanding policy leaders who have combined extraordinary policy-making skills with research in the process of implementing policies.

3. Efforts to expand membership, and involve more younger members and students in the Fall research conference and Association leadership roles. As one way to involve more students in the leadership, two student seats were created for the Policy Council when the downsizing of the Policy Council went into effect in 2013. The new Membership Committee focused its attention on attracting younger members and engaging students in APPAM activities (e.g., recruiting students to a few of the new committees, and developing, with the Conference Committee, a workshop focused on



employment opportunities for MPA/MPP students, and the recent introduction of student “brown bag lunches” and receptions in Washington organized around policy issues). Other efforts undertaken since 2011 that may have increased membership and interest in the Fall conference include the introduction of caucuses (discussion groups on specific management or policy topic) and professional development sessions specifically designed for doctoral students. The Membership Committee and the Association’s leadership created a “Five Year Member Report (2011 – 2015)” and they are in the process of moving to a new database that will make it easier to track information about the member characteristics over time. The total individual membership grew significantly between 2011 and 2014: the number of student members increased from 523 to 970, and the number of professional members rose from 855 to 1,136. In addition, the number of institutional members grew from 80 to 94 (and is 96 as of mid-2015). Further, since 2010, the share of people registered for the Fall conference who are students has risen from 19% to 25%. Altogether, these numbers suggest that the Membership Committee has succeeded in expanding the number of members, and getting more students to join the Association and attend the Fall conference.

When the shift to the new database for members is completed, we will have better data for judging how well the Association is doing in terms of recruiting junior scholars as members and expanding the diversity of the membership. We return to the diversity efforts in discussing ongoing goals.

### ***Goals that Remain Ongoing Goals***

Other goals and governance issues continue to be concerns, however, and thus remain as ongoing goals in the 2015 Strategic Plan. We wish to emphasize that the goals and issues that need continued efforts are not one-off, easily addressed concerns; they are likely to require sustained and creative efforts for some time.

In particular, efforts to expand the diversity of members (as part of the goal of expanding the active membership) need greater attention. The 2011 Strategic Plan noted the importance of racial and ethnic diversity to APPAM (the plan also referenced other types of diversity including gender, discipline, training, methodology and ideology). The Plan did not suggest specific recommendations but rather charged the Membership committee with developing a strategy to ensure racial and ethnic diversity. This charge was later assigned to the new Diversity Committee.

As noted in the Scorecard, the Diversity Committee's primary tasks have included developing three to five sessions specifically related to diversity issues for the Fall conferences, and exploring opportunities for APPAM to work with diversity policy organizations to provide more information about the disciplines of policy analysis and public management. The first task has been accomplished in various ways. For example, the Spring 2013 conference was entirely focused on diversity and equity in public policy, and three sessions created by the Diversity Committee were included in the Fall 2014 conference. APPAM will continue to set aside 3-5 sessions at the Fall conference to ensure diversity related issues continue to have a presence on the agenda. There hasn't been as much movement on the second task. The Diversity Committee has re-connected with PPIA<sup>6</sup> but finds it challenging to work with them given their limited staff capacity. PPIA remains a potentially strong pipeline for diversity, particularly for academic institutional members with masters level programs, and for non-academic members seeking a diverse pool of undergraduate and masters level employment candidates. However, unless APPAM (or some other institution) takes on a larger role (beyond our \$10,000 annual contribution), either by providing more financial support or staff resources, it is unlikely we will be able to leverage our relationship with PPIA beyond what is being done now. We know that the Diversity Committee is exploring possibilities for partnering with several other

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<sup>6</sup> The Public Policy and International Affairs (PPIA) program promotes "diversity and leadership in public service" by offering fellowships to participate in a Junior Summer Institute for underrepresented undergraduates interested in pursuing a masters degree in public or international affairs at one of the PPIA Consortium graduate schools. Other supports also are provided to fellows, including financial assistance towards their masters degree.

organizations that are trying to encourage undergraduates of color to consider careers in policy-related fields, such as economics or political science. We encourage these efforts. Doing so could increase the pipeline of possibly underrepresented faculty and researchers among our institutional members, and increase the diversity of student bodies at our policy school members.

The Association's website has a page on diversity initiatives and it states that APPAM desires the participation of individuals trained in every research discipline related to public policy analysis and management. It further says that special efforts have been made to attract sociologists and environmental scientists to the Association's programs and activities. Nonetheless, research discipline diversity among members is perceived by many as not representing the full spectrum of interests of faculty at policy schools (e.g., national security, international relations, transportation and infrastructure development, energy and the environment). Our in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with Institutional Representatives and Policy Council members indicated that many people view APPAM as focusing almost exclusively on social policy issues such as welfare, health, education, job training programs, immigration, and some public management themes. Given the wider breadth of policy interests of people who conduct research and teach about public policy issues, we recommend that the Membership Committee or Diversity Committee work with the Program Committee to try to attract a greater diversity of research disciplines among members.

Separately, efforts to expand APPAM's international activities and relations with similar policy organizations in other countries received mixed reviews. Most members did not participate in the international conferences that APPAM helped organize over the past five years, and this goal was not a top priority among members who responded to the survey. However, institutional member representatives were quite bull-*ish* on the need for APPAM to reach out to similar organizations or policy schools in other countries, and to build on APPAM's earlier efforts to develop conferences with international themes and participation. Accounting for "globalization" was a theme that many institutional representatives mentioned as important. Moreover, many

stated a desire for opportunities to connect with policy researchers and policymakers in other countries – either at APPAM’s Fall conference or at conferences that might be organized along a policy issue theme where comparative research papers would be presented. We note that there is a “distance” between what the institutional representatives want and what members have shown an interest in with respect to international conferences. Deciding how to proceed with such efforts in the future will have to consider the relative benefits and opportunity costs of investing resources in developing international conferences.

The operational objectives of the 2011 Strategic Plan of exploring opportunities for collaborations with other professional organizations, and fostering occasions for curriculum building related to PhD and masters degree programs do not seem to have been given much attention since 2011. The 2014 Spring conference provided one exception: its theme was “Teaching Policy Analysis and Management in Today’s Classroom.”<sup>7</sup> We are not sure why each of these “other” issues has not received more attention. We suspect that exploring opportunities for collaborations requires further thought as to what the goals would be of such collaborations. We heard various ideas related to these objectives but we did not hear a clearly articulated *raison d’être*.

### ***Summary Evaluation of 2011 Strategic Plan***

In sum, APPAM has made substantial and significant progress in changing the governance structure, developing opportunities to raise the visibility of APPAM among policy makers, and expanding the membership (particularly student members) and increasing the involvement of younger scholars in the association’s conferences. But progress towards expanding the diversity of the membership in terms of race/ethnicity and by discipline, methodological approaches and policy issues of

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<sup>7</sup> The Spring conferences in 2001, and 2004 through 2008 had significant education themes or sub-themes. For a list of the Spring conference themes since 1986, see <http://www.appam.org/events/spring-conference/>.

interest has been harder to achieve during the past five years. Expanding diversity remains a goal for the next five years.

## II. Three Themes for the Next Strategic Goals

Our synthesis of the comments and discussions with the focus groups and in-depth interviews, and responses to the membership survey suggest three major issue-areas where APPAM should focus its strategic efforts for the next five years. These include some of the same issues and themes behind the 2011 Strategic Plan goals. As such, they underline the point that some goals may not be achievable within the time-frame of one strategic plan and on-going efforts by the Association are needed to effect changes embodied in goals. We note that people who participated in the survey and discussions offered many imaginative and thoughtful suggestions for how to advance towards achieving various objectives. We have included a number of these suggestions as examples of what the Association might do during the next five years.

We also note that as a professional organization, APPAM serves at the intersection of the public policy research, policy analysis, and policy-making communities. It is clear from the discussions and comments that APPAM has been most successful at interacting with the first two of these three communities, albeit unevenly across subfields, but has struggled to connect to the policy-making community. The proposed goals in the 2015 Strategic Plan seek to confront that challenge directly, promoting strategies that better equip our researchers and analysts to connect with policymakers, expand the areas of research that may more directly connect scholars with policymakers, and expand the pool of individuals involved with the Association.

The themes behind the concerns we heard most about are desires that APPAM:

- Promote the discipline of public policy analysis and management, and foster the professional development of people with degrees and interests in policy analysis and public management;
- Continue efforts to increase the policy relevance of Association's members' research and expand interactions between researchers and policy makers, including focusing on state and local concerns; and
- Expand efforts to create a more diverse membership – with attention especially to race/ethnicity, academic discipline and policy interests, including policy issues with which other countries also are struggling.

In what follows here, we discuss each of the themes in more detail, including areas of concern and promise that relate to each theme. Our proposed recommendations for a strategic plan to address the themes and concerns are discussed in the subsequent section.

***1. Promote the discipline of public policy analysis and management, and foster the professional development of people with degrees and interests in public policy analysis and management.***

Promoting the discipline: Since at least the mid-1960s, public policy analysis and management has been regarded as a discipline independent and distinct from economics, political science, sociology, psychology, and business management, among other disciplines. Schools of public policy and public affairs were established in part to emphasize that public policy issues needed people trained with different research and management skills and ways of thinking about problems than what people with backgrounds in public administration, business, economics or politics typically have. In recent years, concerns have been raised that public policy analysis and management as a discipline has been subsumed under or treated as secondary to the disciplines of economics, political science, quantitative methods, or sociology. This shifting or deemphasizing of public policy analysis and management as a distinct discipline can be seen in faculty searches at schools of public policy or public affairs. Moreover, some interviewees suggested that papers presented at the Fall research conference or that are published in *JPAM* seem to be disproportionately by economists.

Thus, there is a sense among many members that the discipline of public policy analysis and management needs to be promoted as distinct from other disciplines represented in curricula and faculties of our member institutions. This desire is not new; in many ways it is the genesis of the Association in the late 1970s, and it was a primary issue in the late 1980s when the Association created an earlier version of a strategic plan. Moreover, the issue is linked with a feeling that promoting and

distinguishing the discipline would be boosted if the Association were also to foster professional development programs.

Perhaps the Association's primary mechanism for promoting and distinguishing the discipline of public policy analysis and management is the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (JPAM)*. *JPAM* is a leading journal in the fields of public policy and public management, typically ranked among the top three journals in Public Administration. *JPAM* has a very high visibility in the academic community concerned with public policy analysis and management. Publication within the journal is important to academic institutional members in assessing faculty for tenure and also to non-academic institutional members in demonstrating the excellence of their work. The high visibility of the journal is also important in the development of the field of public policy analysis and management. Nonetheless, the number of submissions greatly exceeds page space available for publication. The overwhelming number of manuscript submissions creates a natural desire to have additional outlets to further disseminate the research and other activities of APPAM's members – and as part of a strategy to promote the discipline of public policy analysis and management.

A sizeable share of interviewees, focus group participants and survey respondents feel that APPAM should continue to consider expanding the portfolio of outlets to disseminate research and other activities by and for its members. With that, there also is a strong belief that the content of the outlets should be subject to a rigorous level of peer review. Currently, the primary components of the Association's media portfolio are *JPAM* and the Association's web site. APPAM's web site, in addition to general content, has hosted a repository of "best" conference papers; the Policy Council voted at its November 2015 meeting to create an annual *Conference Proceedings* volume of such papers. A potentially important addition to these activities would be the initiation of a second peer-reviewed journal that would have a clear vision distinct from that of *JPAM* and other top management journals. We discuss this further in our recommendations for the 2015 Strategic Plan.



Professional Development: Many people applauded APPAM's efforts to facilitate professional development and career mentoring for new researchers – and a substantial number also suggested that APPAM sponsor similar opportunities (at the Fall conference or at other times during the year) for members further along in their careers. In particular, new and seasoned members expressed interest in knowing more about ongoing development of research methodologies that provide more accurate estimations of policy impacts or the effects of program changes. They also mentioned a desire to better understand institutional change processes and how to manage such processes in public agencies. Similarly, workshops that focus on new survey techniques, data sources, or lower-cost evaluation strategies could be sponsored. Three quarters of those surveyed reported being interested or very interested in professional development workshops around the annual conference to build their own capabilities in such areas (for example, grant writing, translating scholarship for public use, and communications training).

Many informants also talked about the Association's unique role in reducing the policy-research divide, enabling more research to inform policymaking and program implementation. Among the suggestions we heard for professional development that could help bridge the policy-research divide are that APPAM provide forums for academics and researchers on ways to communicate research findings and engage stakeholders with the policy implications of members' research. Given the interest among policy makers and program implementers in "evidence based practice," APPAM is well positioned to respond by providing topic-specific training and technical assistance through these types of activities.

A primary goal of the 2011 Strategic Plan was to engage more graduate students and younger scholars in the Association's activities and as we noted earlier, many survey respondents and discussion participants feel the initiatives focused on students and junior scholars are yielding positive results. Among the suggestions we heard for continuing to assist people at the beginning of their careers is that APPAM strengthen its clearinghouse platform for job seekers and employers.

***2. Continue efforts to increase the policy relevance of members' research and expand interactions between researchers and policy makers, including focusing on state and local concerns.***

Increasing the policy relevance of members' work remains a key strategic goal of APPAM. Our members, both individual and institutional, pride themselves on conducting research that is relevant to pressing policy concerns. Many respondents feel the organization should continue to create and nurture opportunities to engage with policy makers, to learn about the policy issues and questions of greatest interest to them, and to convey recent findings and implications to them. However, there was a wide-spread reluctance for the Association to in any way engage in lobbying for particular policies based on some members' research. Instead, the consensus was that the Association could help policy makers identify members who are conducting research that might be relevant for a policy maker's question or concerns. Moreover, there also was a consensus that there are already organizations (e.g., Brookings, AEI, the Urban Institute, Mathematica Policy Research, AcademyHealth) that are better situated than APPAM for organizing forums about particular policy topics for federal policy makers.

A number of suggestions were offered for innovative ways the Association could foster efforts to expand interactions between state policy makers and members. Many of these ideas build upon the suggestions developed in the creation of the Policy Relevance Committee in 2012 and the four "Institutional Member Forums" that have been held since 2012.<sup>8</sup> An idea that drew a lot of discussion is that public policy and public affairs schools in a state (or several schools in nearby states) sponsor day-long or half-day forums on specific topics that are of interest to state policy makers. Such forums might help promote better relations between state legislators and public policy schools within state universities. Topics that might lend themselves to such forums are pre-K public education, disaster management preparedness, and regional infrastructure needs related to energy sources and water use.

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.appam.org/events/member-forums/>

A majority of interviewees and focus group respondents also told us that the distinction between “academics” and “practitioners” seems increasingly confusing and less meaningful. The original distinction, going back to the creation of the Association, was primarily intended to draw non-academics to the Association and create a mix of academics and “practitioners” (i.e., people in research organizations or government agencies, including researchers and policy makers) in leadership positions for the Association. But over time, the distinction between academics and researchers in our institutional member organizations that depend on government grants and contracts has become quite permeable. Researchers have to publish in academic journals to show their research is high-quality, most academics need to obtain grants (often large grants) to fund their research, and many of our members have moved from academic appointments to research organizations or government agencies and vice versa. (This is especially the expectation of many younger colleagues who face greater uncertainty of academic tenure.) The desire to have policy makers within the leadership ranks relates to the goal of expanding interactions between academics, researchers and policy makers. Here it helps to distinguish between policy makers who are non-political appointees and those who are political appointees. Several members told us that when they were in positions as political appointees, they did not have time for association leadership positions and, moreover, they had to resign from any such boards to avoid any possible perception of conflict of interest. Non-political policy makers (people in leadership positions at Congressional agencies such as CBO or CRS and government agencies such as Census and the Bureau of Economic Analysis) have been elected to APPAM leadership positions. Some were researchers or academics earlier in their careers and then took on more management responsibilities and positions within government – again reflecting the fact that many people do not stay with the same organization throughout their careers, especially if they are engaged in public policy issues.

There was strong support for choosing a theme for the Spring conference that would attract more of the general membership and provide an opportunity to engage with

policy makers in Washington, DC. The themes of the last three Spring conferences (2013 – 2015) were frequently mentioned as stimulating intellectual energy. The conferences integrated policy analysis with policy implementation and management, and encouraged participation by government officials and policy makers. At the same time, there also is strong support for including sessions at the Spring conference that focus on teaching issues and professional development that relate to the conference theme.

***3. Expand efforts to create a more diverse membership – with attention especially to race/ethnicity, academic discipline and policy interests, including policy issues with which other countries also are struggling.***

As we noted in our review of progress towards the 2011 Strategic Plan’s goals (see Section I), expanding the racial and ethnic diversity of the Association’s members was a recommendation given to the Membership Committee and later to the Diversity Committee. It is clear from a majority of respondents’ comments that increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the Association’s members and the pool of future faculty and students of the academic institutional members should be an explicit goal of the next strategic plan. In addition, many felt that it is essential to be more nuanced in the way we conduct analyses of and teach about issues where race and ethnicity (and gender) may be important factors, and that this is a topic fundamentally related to efforts to increase the diversity of the Association.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to comments about the need to expand the racial and ethnic diversity of the Association’s members, there also were many comments to the effect that APPAM is perceived by many to be an organization primarily for scholars and policy makers who focus on social policy issues, such as education, welfare and poverty, job training, health, and child and family policies. This observation is in contrast to the early years

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<sup>9</sup> Related to this, many academic members also noted that there is some discomfort or lack of skills and experience in directly discussing issues of race in the classroom. We heard several anecdotal comments about students requesting that race/ethnicity issues be discussed in the classroom and faculty members are not sure how to handle this.

of the Association when people with a wider range of policy interests who taught at public policy and public affairs schools or were in government participated in the annual conferences and were active members of the Association. The result of the past two decades' shift in policy issues dominating the Fall research conference is that perhaps half the faculty of public policy and public affairs schools no longer consider APPAM to be even their secondary association of choice.<sup>10</sup> Further, many public policy issues that involve substantial public funding (from all levels of government) are rarely if ever represented at the annual conferences or in other activities of the Association.

Given the breadth of policy issues that are taught in our academic institutional members and the extent of government funding of many public issues, many respondents suggested it would be in the Association's interest to increase efforts to attract people from a wider set of disciplinary backgrounds who have policy interests beyond social policy issues. Examples of current policy issues that are discussed in our member institutional organizations but rarely are the focus of sessions at the annual research conference or papers within *JPAM*: global issues such as effects of trade agreements on labor or large population migrations due to civil war; national security; infrastructure development, including high-speed rail and mass transit systems; growing shortages of uncontaminated water supplies; and how human brain development affects issues as diverse as children's educational attainment and choices involving risk that policymakers are requiring of the elderly.

The 2011 Strategic Plan did not focus on increasing international members but the 2015 focus group participants and interview respondents voiced strong support for developing strategies to more meaningfully integrate colleagues in other countries into the Fall and Spring conferences, and encourage their submission of manuscripts to *JPAM* and content for the APPAM website. Recognizing and addressing the

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<sup>10</sup> The estimate of "half" is based on comments from our interviews and discussions with the focus groups. We note that in the first two decades of APPAM's existence, the Fall conferences were attended by most faculty of Schools of Public Policy or Public Affairs. Since then, of course, policy schools have grown, university travel budgets have tightened and there are more professional associations competing for faculty attention – as many people told us.

intertwining of countries' economic, social, and global security interests is viewed by many as a 21<sup>st</sup> century priority for the Association.

Despite the high level of enthusiasm for expanding international engagement, co-sponsoring international conferences as a strategy for pursuing this aim had less support. Very few APPAM members have participated in the APPAM international conferences. In the 2015 survey, 95% of respondents reported never having attended the international conference over the last ten years. Moreover, we do not know how many international APPAM members became involved in the organization via an international conference.<sup>11</sup> The general view is that it is difficult to evaluate whether co-sponsoring the international conferences has been an effective strategy for facilitating increased engagement of non-US policy researchers in APPAM or research and educational collaborations among American and non-American members. In addition, the survey of the members as well as the discussions with the focus groups and interviewees did not yield a consensus view of the benefits of investing in international conferences.

There was some consensus of opinion that if the international conferences were to continue beyond the conference scheduled for June 2016, they would generate more interest if each were focused on a specific policy concern shared by many countries. (The theme for the 2016 conference does this; it is "Inequalities: Addressing the Growing Challenge for Policymakers Worldwide".) Conferences that would afford opportunities for engaging with comparative research findings generated more enthusiasm. Finally, a number of people who had been to the international conferences commented that if the international conference were continued, the current model of finding local partners in the host country should not be continued and the conference should be managed more directly by APPAM staff. In addition, a strong view was expressed in favor of developing a regular pattern for the international conference – for example, every year or every other year and at a standard time of year

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<sup>11</sup> Hopefully, the new membership database will enable us to learn this.

(e.g., late June was discussed). Creating a more regular international conference schedule that APPAM members could anticipate and plan for was viewed as a promising method for increasing participation.

Another suggestion for creating a more diversified APPAM membership involves paying greater attention to issues of concern among state and local levels of US government. Many policy problems are not solely or even mostly federal issues, and most state and local government agencies are poorly resourced for addressing the problems. Many leaders within local and state agencies, however, want to know more about research findings or best management practices for addressing their problems. There was some enthusiasm for an expansion of the new APPAM forums that have been organized by institutional members on specific state or local issues of interest to agency people in their state. Such forums could be a promising strategy for increasing engagement with policy makers. Missing from the discussion about this suggestion, however, were expectations about the role of APPAM staff and the level of resources that might be needed to organize the forums. In prioritizing activities that can be supported by the Association, this may be a strategy that institutional members should engage in with minimal APPAM staff assistance.

### **III. Recommendations for 2015 Strategic Plan Goals with Specific Action Suggestions**

The goals recommended for the 2015 Strategic Plan are:

- Promote the discipline of public policy analysis and management, and foster the professional development of people with degrees and interests in policy analysis and public management;
- Continue efforts to increase the policy relevance of Association's members' research and expand interactions between researchers and policy makers, including focusing on state and local concerns; and
- Expand efforts to create a more diverse membership – with attention especially to race/ethnicity, academic discipline and policy interests, including policy issues with which other countries also are struggling.

To meet each of these three goals, we offer the following *specific action suggestions*:

#### ***I. To promote the discipline of public policy analysis and management, and foster the professional development of people with degrees and interests in policy analysis and public management:***

1. *Create a new Professional Development Committee to consider virtual and face-to-face professional development workshops to be offered throughout the calendar year to our members. Association resources together with small "tuition" fees could be used to pay for professional development workshops for junior and "seasoned" members on topics such as grant writing, translating scholarship for public use, and communication skills.*

2. *Invest more Association resources in doctoral professional development, communication about career options, and a strengthened position at the Fall conference to help employers and job seekers to meet. Some of these tasks could be assigned to the Membership Committee and others to the new Professional Development Committee.*

3. *Task a committee to analyze options for a second APPAM peer-reviewed journal that would have a clear vision distinct from that of JPAM and top management journals. Some people suggested a new journal might focus on articles that synthesize research findings that suggest new policies or programmatic changes, or further research needs.*



The range of suggestions we heard reflect some tension between creating a high-impact journal for academics and a journal that might be read by a wider audience of people involved in implementing policies. We believe the committee should evaluate the needs of APPAM members, taking into account both this tension and the emphasis of existing journals. The committee also should estimate the financial resources that will be needed to support the start-up of a second journal. We recommend that the committee provide one or two alternatives for the Policy Council and the Association leadership to consider by a year from now.

4. *Solicit calls for pre-Fall conference workshops focused on topics about a) increasing relevance of our work through deeper engagement with policymakers/program implementers and b) developing more rigor in our use of research methodologies.* This task could be assigned to the Conference and the Policy Relevance Committees.

***II. To continue efforts to increase the policy relevance of the Association's members' research (and teaching) and expand interactions between researchers and policy makers, including focusing on state and local concerns:***

1. *APPAM, through the Policy Relevance Committee, should continue pressing its existing mechanisms to improve policy engagement and attempt new ways to engage policy makers outside of our existing mechanisms.* At the Fall conference, the organization should prioritize getting policy makers to the meeting, giving them a platform to discuss emerging research needs and findings that have policy relevance. The President-elect and Program Committee have a \$10,000 budget for bringing speakers to the conference who otherwise might not be able to attend and a \$10,000 "new initiatives" budget. Priority with the speaker budget should be given to paying for federal and state policy makers' travel to the conference. When the conference is outside of Washington, DC, the Program Committee also should try to involve local policy makers. Moreover, there is no one way to expand interactions with policy makers, and the organization should be flexible and reflective in testing approaches.

2. *Efforts should continue to improve the Association's website with particular attention to policymakers looking for policy-relevant materials.* This task is one of those that require sustained efforts in conjunction with the Communications Committee.

3. *APPAM should continue to press for the use of research in policymaking and the ongoing need to improve the policy data infrastructure.* Given the importance of using data in policymaking and protecting the federal and state policy data infrastructure, this task could be given to a new ad hoc committee. The committee should find out what other professional organizations are doing in this context and explore whether it would be more effective to have a collaborative effort to protect and improve the policy data infrastructure.

4. *Working with the institutional members, develop and analyze options for engagement with state and local government agencies, and international agencies to hold a forum addressing an issue of importance to these agencies.* Many state and local government agencies, and international agencies, need help with organizational and managerial issues or measurement and data analytic activities that could be the topics of such forums. APPAM's academic members would benefit by increasing their contacts with "clients" for students' applied research projects and researchers would gain insights into sources of variation in policy implementation.

5. *Develop a process to modify the section in the Bylaws that relates to the elections for executive positions within the Association and the Policy Council members such that the current distinction between academics and practitioners is changed to a distinction between people working in academic settings and people working in other settings.* The Association remains committed to wanting policy makers, and people implementing policies or managing public programs to be actively involved in the Association's activities and leadership positions when they can.

***III. Expand efforts to create a more diverse membership – with attention especially to race/ethnicity, academic discipline and policy interests, including policy issues with which other countries also are struggling:***

1. *Expand the efforts of the current Diversity Committee by dedicating additional resources to further encourage more racial and ethnic diversity in the APPAM membership and leadership.*
  
2. *Create and fund an APPAM fellowship for a to-be-determined number of PhD students of diverse backgrounds to support membership and attendance at the Fall conference.<sup>12</sup>*
  
3. *Create and fund mentoring and professional development programs for emerging scholars who are under-represented in the profession (e.g., are from minority groups or are women). Such programs could be held at the Fall conference or also could be held two times during the year in several regional locations. The American Economics Association’s Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Professions (CSWEP) holds 2-day mentoring sessions for younger women immediately following the AEA annual meetings, and this might be a good template for APPAM.*
  
4. *Create a separate committee (or sub-committee of the Membership Committee) that is tasked with publicizing APPAM’s desire to include more areas of policy interest in the organization’s activities, especially the Fall research conference. We recommend that the committee make overtures to at least the following: deans of public policy and public affairs schools, and leaders of other member institutions with a mix of policy areas (e.g., Brookings); APPAM institutional representatives; member academic institutions’ faculty whose research interests are other than social policy issues (e.g., their interests focus on national security, international relations, environmental issues, large scale infrastructure projects); and Association members asking them to reach out to their colleagues in their own schools as well as other colleagues who they know who conduct research on public policy issues other than social policy issues. Additional*

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<sup>12</sup> This proposal was in the 2011 Strategic Plan as well.

overtures might be made to other organizations whose interests overlap with those of APPAM (such as the Public Management Research Association (PMRA) and the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA)).

5. *Task the new committee (or sub-committee) with coordinating with the Program Committee (and President-elect) to create a symposium and at least four sessions (with perhaps two being round-table sessions) that focus on policy topics beyond social policy issues.* While this task is currently conducted by the President-elect, we believe it should be formally part of the charge to the Program Committee. Examples of topics that might be considered include: public and non-profit finance and budgeting, energy and the environment, public infrastructure investments, and national security.

6. *Specific tactics should be developed to attract non-U.S. participation in each of the core APPAM activities.* For example, developing content and marketing for the website that would be inclusive to an international policy and management perspectives (e.g., identifying complementary imagery as a counterpoint to the U.S. Capitol image on the website). In addition, the Fall and Spring conference themes, roundtables and other sessions should be reviewed to identify ways to signal interest in participation by non-U.S. scholars and possibly to reserve dedicated slots for international or comparative sessions.

7. *Create an ad hoc committee tasked with determining how to move forward with regard to the future of the international conference after the June 2016 conference.*

## **Concluding Comment**

APPAM has made substantial progress in meeting some of the goals and addressing some operational issues that were in the 2011 Strategic Plan. This progress is due to the commitment and efforts of the Policy Council, APPAM members and the dedication of the APPAM staff. The 2015 Strategic Planning Committee proposes reinforcing ongoing efforts towards the 2011 Strategic Plan goals of policy relevance, disciplinary integration and diversity. In addition, the 2015 Committee identified further opportunities for moving the Association forward during the next five years. Many of these opportunities can be addressed nicely by the new committee structure that was implemented as a result of the 2011 Strategic Plan.

The proposed 2015 Strategic Plan is organized around three goals, with suggested tasks for addressing each of the goals. Some of these goals will not be fully addressed within the next five years but instead will require ongoing efforts for some time. Some tasks will require additional financial resources and strong commitments from people who agree to serve on committees. The Association's leadership will likely have to make some trade-offs in determining which tasks to prioritize. Nonetheless, the Strategic Planning Committee believes that by pursuing the proposed 2015 Strategic Plan, APPAM will strengthen its ability to serve its members and support its mission of improving public policy and management.