

Association of Sustainability Practitioners (A.S.P.)

A handbook of guidance

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1 The Purpose of A.S.P.

The purpose of A.S.P. is to promote learning that transforms behaviour from unsustainable to sustainable practices.

The mission of A.S.P. is to bring about these transformations in as many economically active people as possible through its membership network.

A.S.P. is a membership organisation that continually adapts to the learning and creative input of its members. Through it, people support each other to promote the purpose and mission of the association. This support also promotes personal and professional development.

Sustainability is understood to include all definitions that do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Social Justice is regarded as an integral part of sustainability.

2 The Activities of A.S.P.

A.S.P. provides a forum for the benefit of its members, which also provides benefit indirectly to clients. This forum is based on a database of all associates, searchable by key skills, professional specialism, location, past experience and other categories as appropriate.

2a Members benefit from:

Combining with others to accelerate change

Co-operating to win work

Quality Assurance of work

Peer to peer support and personal development

Information exchange and learning

2b Clients of A.S.P. members benefit from the added value of:

Review of work done

Review of the people doing the work

Assurance for working practices

A.S.P. has the capacity to manage information, but cannot deliver work of its own accord. Members are delegated to promote the collective work of people in A.S.P. to a variety of audiences. Groups of members may use the association to lead bids where contractual obligations require it.

2c Definition of A.S.P work

The boundaries that identify work as 'A.S.P.' work are set by the criteria below. These criteria define what *must* be included, but also allow the flexibility to include other aspects of interest.

- i) All work must relate directly to behavioural transformation that moves people from unsustainable to sustainable practices.
- ii) All work carried out in association with the A.S.P. brand, must contain a process of Action and Reflection at more than one level. Action is the 'doing' of work, reflection is the thoughtful review of what happens whilst doing. The order of reflection can be at personal, group, organisational or community level, but must include the issue related to sustainability in the work.
- iii) All work must increase understanding amongst the participants of the complex relationships encountered in the system of work
- iv) All work must be conducted in the spirit of the values of A.S.P. membership, and must be governed by the policies of A.S.P.

2d A.S.P. Services

A.S.P. represents the collective experience and expertise of its members. Services are proposed, developed, delivered and adapted by members. All services currently fall within the following range:

- Support for commercial work in the UK and internationally
- Support for learning
- Quality Assurance
- Generation of working opportunities

Specific services under these headings are described below, and are divided into those that benefit the membership as a whole, those that benefit individual members and those that benefit clients.

i) **Collective services**

Elected Associate Directors, act for all fellow members of A.S.P. to promote learning and opportunity. With agreement and guidance from Associate Directors, members may also provide these services.

- ✧ **Promotion of A.S.P.** and its ability to offer learning support, teaching, consultancy and research to:
 - To educational establishments
 - To commercial concerns
 - To authorities and other non-profit organisations
- ✧ **Promotion of working opportunities** to members through tender alerts, media analysis etc.
- ✧ **Representation of A.S.P.** at conferences, in think tanks and in an advisory capacity on public projects or initiatives.
- ✧ **Development of A.S.P.** through membership management, applications for funding, and connections to like-minded individuals and organisations.

ii) **Individual services**

Members provide each other:

- ✧ **Learning support**, including topic discussion groups, learning groups, seminars, a 'knowledge bank', mentoring/coaching and shadow consultancy
- ✧ **Quality Assurance** through regular work reviews to assess content, professionalism, process and outcomes for a qualitative rating that reflects experience and skill.
- ✧ **Additional resource** through collaboration on working projects to combine skills and experience, and to win work that requires more capacity than small consulting concerns can provide.
- ✧ **Personal support** to help maintain energy, enthusiasm and focus in challenging circumstances.

The services described in i) and ii) above are supported by Symbiotic Services, a co-ordinating administrative resource owned by A.S.P.

iii) **Client services**

Clients receive indirect service to gain:

- ✧ **Added Value** through the guaranteed review and assessment of work by skilled third parties
- ✧ **Informed perspectives** on the relative skills and experience of potential consultants/learning partners.
- ✧ **Guaranteed standards** of conduct within the parameters set by A.S.P. membership

3 How does it do it?

3a Adaptive learning

This section aims to settle debate amongst the more academic minded members of A.S.P. concerning learning models.

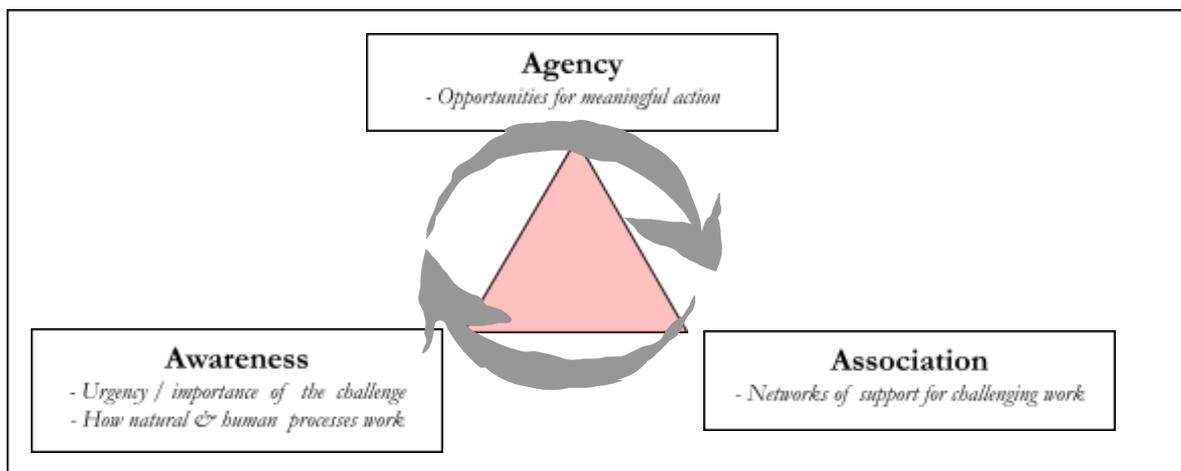
A.S.P. is permanently engaged in a study of the conditions for transformational change related to movement from unsustainable to sustainable ways of living. This study is an action and reflection process which creates good conditions for collaboration, whilst also providing the challenging edge. Action and reflection permeates all A.S.P. branded work, ensuring the quality and rigour of members work. The process itself is critical to transformation.

The current model¹ employed by A.S.P. notes that Awareness, Agency and Association are all essential elements of transformational change, where:

- **Awareness** refers to sustainability issues
- **Agency** refers to the ability to do something about them, and
- **Association** refers to support from others facing these challenges

The model is not to be confused with systems that attempt to label and order the nature or dynamics of change processes through hierarchical levels of development (eg. Ken Wilber's Integral Model or Bill Torbert's Action Logic model). A.S.P. recognises the diversity of its membership, and encourages members to work according to their own favoured frameworks for development.

A.S.P. aims to satisfy the condition of Association in order to help members themselves satisfy the conditions of Agency and Awareness to become effective change agents. The illustration below is adapted from Ballard's work.



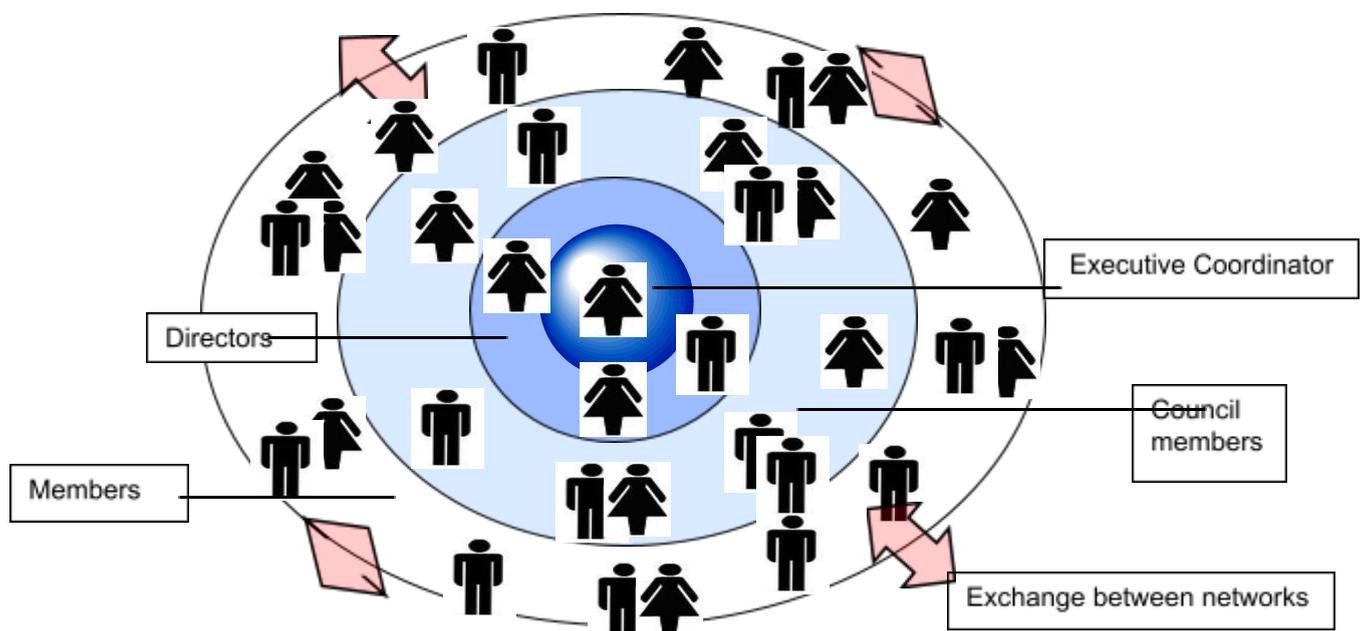
¹ Ballard 2004

3b Organisational Structure

Management framework

A.S.P. is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee guided by an accountable board of management and supported by a council of associates, all of whom are drawn from the membership. The structure is more dynamic than is conventional with both formal and informal cycles of change built into the constitution for Directors and Council members.

The Council and Board are serviced by an administrative resource known as Symbiotic Services (Appendix 1).



Membership framework

Members self-organise into project teams and learning groups, which form, dissolve and re-form, according to members' interests.

Administrative framework

The only employee within the structure is the Executive Coordinator, who is the manager of information exchange services². A.S.P. is in negotiations with like-minded organisations needing the same information management services, with a view to forming a subsidiary partnership called Symbiotic Services. If formed, this company will increase administrative efficiency across the partner organisations.

² This initial position may change with demand. Staff costs should never dictate the activities of A.S.P.

4 Who is involved?

4a Members

Membership is open to people from all disciplines whose work relates well to A.S.P.'s mission and who wish to work collaboratively. To become a member, people will have to demonstrate:

- an appreciation of the conditions of transformational change
(Agency, Awareness and Association)
- an understanding of action and reflection processes
(cycles of Action and Inquiry conducted at many levels - personal, group, organisational and community)
- a willingness to adhere to the criteria for A.S.P. work
(Systems views, reflective cycles and action orientation)
- a willingness to adhere to the values outlined in the membership agreement
(Openness, honesty, respect, trust, collaboration and sharing)

Specific academic qualifications (such as higher degrees in Environmental Science, Business Responsibility etc.) are not pre-requisites for membership of the association.

Members are not expected to show strength in all areas, and all members are valued equally. Quality assurance is not 'rated' but is offered through an open record of reviews by peers.

Interest in membership has so far been shown by people involved in leadership, management, marketing, finance, research, teaching, facilitation and consultancy. Public, private and voluntary sectors are all represented.

4b Management

The board of management is made up of 8-12 members. The list below are nominees put for election in June 2005:

Associate Director (evolution)	Mike Zeidler
Associate Director (research)	Ian Roderick
Director (finance & company secretary)	Sue Maude
Associate Director (professional development)	Steve Banks
Associate Director (commerce)	Andy Middleton
Executive Coordinator, & Director	Mike Zeidler, Acting
Council member,	Simon Cooper
Council member,	Esther Maughen
Council member,	Michelle Williams
Council member,	Deb Seamark
Member,	David Ballard
Member,	Gill Coleman

The Executive Coordinator is the only director with a long contract (of up to 3 years), and the remaining directors have executive duties, but are elected annually.

Board members are the accountable guardians of the A.S.P. mission, whose task is to maintain focus amongst the membership and to uphold the policies and values of A.S.P. The board is responsible for reporting the collective action of the Association and for ensuring the financial prudence of the same.

The Council is drawn by lot from the membership, and is made up of 26 people. Council members are responsible for consulting with the board on matters of strategic import and may be called to settle matters of dispute

5 Who does A.S.P. work for?

The market potential for A.S.P. is vast. Factors indicating the scale of the market include: Increasing news coverage of environmental and social injustice issues across all media. New national and international legislation aimed at the effects of global economy. New corporate language and job titles, and the proliferation of consultants and agencies incorporating 'sustainability' in their service offer.

A.S.P. works for its members, but in doing so, it nurtures relationships with clients and potential partners.

Since 1984, a number of associates have been involved in paid work through the New Academy of Business. A small amount continues with the British Council and Bath University, and when the association is launched, relationships from the New Academy will be re-kindled. Good relations exist with the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations, DFID, Birkbeck College, The Aspin Institute, Lancaster and Manchester Universities and many others.

A.S.P. represents a broader range of skills, experience and interest than the New Academy had, and work is expected to develop in all sectors, and with organisations of all sizes. Searchable lists of clients and partners are available on the web site.

How do people Join?

The two fundamental conditions of membership are that people must demonstrate that they embrace learning through a process of Action and Reflection (see Section 3a), and that they are committed to transforming behaviours from unsustainable to sustainable ways of living (see Section 2c).

An introductory interview will establish the specific skills, interests and experience of each applicant, and 'test' their understanding of the issues of Awareness, Agency, Association and Action & Reflection. Notes of the interview will be shared with the applicant and three members, and subject to approval, the applicant will become a provisional member of the Association.

On acceptance to provisional membership, the applicant signs an associates agreement (see appendix 2). Fully approved membership is granted once three pieces of work have been reviewed through the Association by peer learning groups.

5) Finance

The budget for 2005-10 contains a number of assumptions about income and expenditure. This projection shows donations sufficient to build reserves whilst membership and commercial income are low. The charitable endowment is used to promote learning and best practice.

Potential Partners

A.S.P.'s principle role is to connect and assist people those whose learning and action is directed toward sustainability. As a result, A.S.P. will forge a large number of partnerships, which will wax and wane with the rhythms of changing events.

Strong synergies with the following organisations have already been noted, and many more will emerge as members bring their own thoughts and connections to the table.

Bath University: The partnership between the University and A.S.P. is under review since the management school has developed its own capacity and no longer needs the support that A.S.P. has traditionally offered. A.S.P. will continue to supply leads for the Msc in responsible business and may continue to supply some course content.

The Schumacher Society: Is developing plans for an institute which will concentrate on research into sustainable issues. Simultaneously, the Schumacher College is considering the way it might follow up its business

courses with supportive consultancy. A.S.P. could happily work in partnership with Schumacher to provide learning resources (people and skills) that help to achieve our common goals. There may be opportunities to share coordinating administrative resource.

Gaia Coach Institute: Is linked to the Schumacher society, and may provide high quality learning space for New Academy members. No formal contact has yet been made.

Centre for Sustainable and Environmental Management: Is run by Ross King, who is promoting of an 'MBA of the Future'. There is clear potential for members to collaborate.

L.E.A.D.(leadership for Environment and Development): This network may be a connecting system for overseas affiliates. No formal contact has yet been made.

Society for the Environment: Has just received a Royal Charter and given licences to nine of its professional institutional members to enable them to award the new qualification of Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv), which they claim is the 'pre-eminent qualification and recognition of excellence for environmental professionals'. Criteria for CEnv are based on education, training, experience, and professional and ethical conduct.

SocEnv (their acronym) aspires to be 'the leading and co-ordinating umbrella body in environmental matters and a pre-eminent champion of a sustainable environment', but also 'fosters a culture of inclusivity and ethical behaviour for the common good'. The 'identities of its Constituent Bodies are maintained, while their primacy as centres of excellence within their fields is recognised and enhanced'. No contact has been made, but a relationship may be beneficial.

Other networks that have been mentioned to date include: Chaordic Commons, Authentic Leaders, Susten8, Be the change, Wisdom at Work and The Natural Step.

Appendix 1

Symbiotic Services

Symbiotic Services is a resource that co-ordinates information, provides administrative support and offers marketing for membership organisations that share purposes but have distinctive directions.

Symbiotic Services has its own board, with one member from each partner organisation. The board is responsible for ensuring that the service responds to shareholders needs, and for reporting on performance.

The resource provides partners and their members with administrative support for the following activities:

- Management and Direction
- Data management
- Communications
- Promotional activities

A partitioned database is used for supportive cross-referral between the shareholding organisations³. Shared overheads reduce costs to improve cash flow. The promotional service helps members (and their clients) to maximise the benefit of their work, whilst reducing the dependence of partners on donations by generating income. The collective 'punch' of partners can be marshalled by Symbiotic Services when appropriate.

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This diagramme illustrates existing partners and some speculative propositions.

³ Most information is self-regulated by members with remote access to the data.