ASPBOK 2.0

Guide to the Strategic Planning and Strategic Management Body of Knowledge

Second Edition
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The Association for Strategic Planning (ASP) is a professional society whose mission is to help people and organizations succeed through improved strategic thinking, planning, and action.

Founded in 1999, the ASP is a not-for-profit professional association dedicated to advancing thought and practice in strategy development and deployment and promoting strategic planning and management for business, nonprofit, and government organizations worldwide. ASP provides opportunities to explore cutting-edge strategic planning principles and practices that enhance organizational success and advance members and organizations' knowledge, capability, capacity for innovation, and professionalism.

Our diverse membership reflects a broad range of industries. Members include:

- **Organizational Leaders**: business, government, and nonprofit leaders responsible for strategy design and execution, from CEO to those leading a division, department, or team that has a critical strategy component;
- **Strategy Practitioners/Consultants**: internal and external practitioners/consultants who provide content and process expertise for setting and implementing strategic direction; and
- **Academics**: professors, authors, and students who create and transfer new knowledge to enhance the effectiveness of strategy and further the profession.

ASP is recognized worldwide as the pre-eminent professional association for those engaged in strategic thinking, planning, and action. Leaders concerned with steering an organization through strategic thinking, planning, and action know of and turn to ASP for access to knowledge and for access to a community of like-minded leaders and professionals.

Three professional levels are recognized by ASP, identified by the logos below: Strategic Management Professional (certification), Strategic Planning Professional (certification), and Strategic Planning Associate (designation).
Section I: The Strategic Management Framework

Chapter 1 - Overview

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is our hope that the ASPBOK 2.0 Guide will establish a common language and set of best practices for certification of professionals in strategic planning and strategic management. The purpose of the ASP Certification Program is to create a high level of quality and consistency within the strategic planning and management industry so that strategic planners and those responsible for developing and deploying strategy can assist organizations in meeting and exceeding the challenges of the 21st century. ASP offers two certifications, the Level I Strategic Planning Professional (SPP) and the Level II Strategic Management Professional (SMP), and a designation, the Strategic Planning Associate (SPA). ASP members as well as nonmembers are eligible to apply for certification. The Association also qualifies Registered Educational Providers (REPs) to offer training courses and programs in strategic planning and management that align with ASP’s BOK 2.0 Framework, including but not limited to courses to prepare individuals for passing the certification exams.

1.2 BASE DEFINITIONS

- **Strategy** is the calculation of objectives, concepts (ways), and resources (means) within acceptable bounds of risk to create more favorable outcomes (ends) than might otherwise occur by chance or at the hands of others.

- **Strategic planning** is an organization’s process of identifying its future direction and strategy and allocating resources in pursuit of that future direction.

- **Strategic management** is an organization’s process of continuous planning, executing, monitoring, analyzing and assessing all that is necessary for an organization to meet its goals and objectives in pursuit of a future direction.

1.3 ASP CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Strategic Planning and Strategic Management Certification Credentials used for this manual have been based on:

- **Market Needs**—an extensive survey was conducted with ASP members regarding their wants and desires and the perceived benefits of planning and management certification. The results included a resounding “yes” to the need for a standardized certification.

- **Best Practices Research**—a detailed set of interviews were conducted with more than 20 firms and universities to ensure a best practice Body of Knowledge Guide for the 21st century. Also the certification development process itself included interviews and process reviews with more than 10 other excellent associations such as Project Management Institute (PMI), Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), etc., to avoid reinventing the wheel.

This Guide to the Body of Knowledge representing current best practices in the field of strategic planning and strategic management is the result of interviewing the best 20+ firms and advanced educational institutions we could collectively identify that teach strategic planning in some form. In addition, we reviewed their course purposes, benefits, and agendas where these existed.
These organizations were identified collectively by our seven Core Project Team Members and our roughly 20 Extended Team Members. We were able to identify everything that was being taught in 2008–09 that is relevant in the twenty-first century. This Body of Knowledge Guide is what these many organizations, senior-level professionals, and faculty members collectively believe represents the meaningful knowledge about strategic planning and strategic management that, if properly applied, would lead to significantly improved organizational results. It is organized under the rubric of Lead—Think—Plan—Act that is the identity of our Association.

Since the first draft, this Body of Knowledge Guide has undergone extensive review, critique, and revisions to represent a consensus version of the desired knowledge required by successful practitioners, both within and outside of ASP.

Our final review was held with an Advisory Board of Pioneers consisting of the most distinguished professionals in the field who are members of ASP.

This research led to two goals:

- **Phase I**—to develop a best practice Body of Knowledge Guide in the strategic planning and strategic management Field (embodying ASP’s Lead—Think—Plan—Act mantra) for both Levels I and II below.

- **Phase II**—to develop an ongoing certification process that would include these components:
  - Body of Knowledge exams with an ethics consideration
  - Registered Educational Providers (REPs) to provide the education
  - Independent governance structure
  - An application process and criteria that take into account an applicant’s life, jobs, experiences, and education
  - Administrative support to run the day-to-day certification program for ASP
  - An independent testing service

This project has been supported by extensive outreach and inclusiveness to everyone interested in this project; feedback, critiques, and recommendations to improve the result have been obtained from many stakeholders interested in strategic planning and management.

**Results—Credentialing at these Levels of Professionalism**

1. Strategic Planning Professionals (SPP)—Level I
2. Strategic Management Professionals (SMP)—Level II
3. Strategic Planning Associate (SPA) Designation

**Certification Program Vision Elements**

- This certification and its Body of Knowledge Guide establish best practices and clear professional standards.
- The certification program is based upon objective criteria that cover the full set of knowledge associated with the Body of Knowledge Guide (BOK) of Lead—Think—Plan—Act in Strategic Planning and Management.
- This certification recognizes expertise gained from appropriate life and work experiences.
- ASP’s BOK Guide and certification process will be established using rigorous criteria, in keeping with the standards of the national organizations that offer certification programs.

**Mission of this Certification Program**

This certification program enables ASP members and nonmembers to become highly knowledgeable and skilled professionals in strategic planning and strategic management (Lead—Think—Plan—Act), and to be recognized as such.
Mission

To improve the quality and consistency of Strategic Planning and Management as a community of practitioners, or profession.

Expectations and Rough Profiles for the Levels of ASP Certifications

To better understand what one can expect in term of performance from a Strategic Management Professional (SMP) versus a Strategic Planning Professional (SPP) versus a Strategic Planning Associate (SPA) a conceptual model has been defined based on levels of cognition that build on prior knowledge and level of complexity. ASP has chosen to use the 2001 Blooms Taxonomy model, shown in Figure 1 below to facilitate this understanding. (Bloom, B.S.; Engelhart, M.D., Furst, E.J., Hill, W.H. and Krathwohl, D.R. 1956. Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay Company.)

![Figure 1: Performance Expectations based on the 2001 Bloom’s Taxonomy model](image)

These performance expectations move from the least complex at the base of the pyramid to higher order thinking skills at the top. Leadership is perpetual and applied at each level of the pyramid. The SMP certification focuses on an integrated perspective of the enterprise (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). The SPP certification focuses on systemic programming of identified strategies (knowledge, comprehension and application). The SPA designation focuses on the same knowledge and comprehension content as the SPP exam. The manner in which a Strategic Planner or Strategic Manager moves through the Lead-Think-Plan-Act pedagogy is similar to the increasing levels of cognition built on prior knowledge illustrated by the taxonomy pyramid. In this Guide, learning outcomes are defined as:

- **Remembering (Knowledge Level):** Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling pertinent knowledge from long-term memory
• **Understanding (Comprehension Level):** Building meaning from spoken, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, comparing, contrasting, and explaining

• **Applying (Application Level):** Executing a procedure

• **Analyzing (Analysis Level):** The process of breaking down material into component parts and determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiation

• **Creating (Synthesis Level):** Arranging elements in a coherent whole or a new pattern or structure

• **Evaluating (Evaluation Level):** Critiquing and making judgments based on criteria and standards

**Requirements for Certification**

The requirements for certification are detailed below.

**LEVEL I—Strategic Planning Professional (SPP)**

1. At least two years’ experience in a planning role or as a junior external consultant
2. Ethical, has integrity and knows how to maintain confidentiality
3. Manager of themselves first, then able to collaborate with others
4. Interpersonal leadership skills with executives on a one-one basis such as coaching, advising, etc.
5. An accomplished analyst in future environmental scanning and current state assessment (SWOT Analysis)
6. Excellent critical thinking skills and a basic understanding of strategic and systems thinking
7. Frequent work with executives and their organizational units such as business unit heads or managers/leaders of major staff units and their teams
8. Facilitates action, execution, and implementation of the strategic and annual plans
9. A working knowledge of change management and the processes and infrastructures that successful change requires
10. Demonstrated mastery of selected parts of this Body of Knowledge Guide through REP Courses/PDUs, etc.

![Certified Association for Strategic Planning]

**LEVEL II—Strategic Management Professional (SMP)**

1. At least five years’ experience in planning as an internal executive or external consultant participating in or leading multiple strategic planning and management assignments
2. Holds the Strategic Planning Professional (SPP) credential or meets all of its requirements
3. Demonstrated mastery of the entire ASP Body of Knowledge Guide through REP Courses/PDUs, etc.
4. Works with C-Level (CEOs, CIOs, CFOs etc.) executives and their teams
5. Uses the full Body of Knowledge Guide and facilitates getting the organization to its desired outcomes
6. A strategic and systems thinker who regularly applies systemic thinking and skills
7. An advocate for the full field of strategic planning and management and all its Lead-Think-Plan-Act components
8. Demonstrated strategic leadership in an organization, sector, or the planning field
Level- Strategic Planning Associate Designation

Expectations and Rough Profile for the designation of an ASP Strategic Planning Apprentice

1. No years’ experience necessary in a planning role or as a junior external consultant
2. Someone just starting out in planning or transferring their career into planning from another discipline such as marketing, finance, human resources, or Organizational Development (OD)
3. If a student, then in their last year of school (undergraduate or graduate degree) with the prospect of graduating within 12 months
4. Not required to have business acumen yet
5. Demonstrated mastery of the same selected parts of this Body of Knowledge Guide as the current Level I (SPP - Strategic Planning Professional) through passing the SPP Level Test Examination (ASP may grant scholarships for those in need)
6. Ethical, has integrity, and knows how to maintain confidentiality based on two character/professional references
7. Academic transcripts to show academic background/degrees obtained/expected in the next 12 months.
8. Willingness and ability to be mentored and form an apprenticeship with a more senior level planner specifically identified to ASP who in turn provides them with a letter of reference
9. Manager of themselves first, then able to collaborate with others
10. Knowledge of interpersonal leadership skills with executives/managers on a one-one basis such as coaching, advising, etc.
11. Excellent critical thinking skills and a basic understanding of strategic thinking and systems thinking
12. Understanding of how to facilitate action, execution, and implementation of strategic/annual plans
13. Expected to become a strategic planning professional within three years by submitting an application, earning six CEUs/90 PDUs from REPs/ASP (and retaking exam), and paying the application and examination fees

1.4 BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY

This section provides best practice criteria for authors of strategic planning and management frameworks that support the Association for Strategic Planning’s Lead-Think-Plan-Act rubric and accompanying Body of Knowledge Guide.

These best practices have been developed by a group of international trainers, coaches, academics, practitioners, and consultants, with experience in many different strategic planning and management systems and frameworks. Several purposes are served:
• ASP will expand and refine the current Body of Knowledge Guide to include these best practices.
• ASP will maintain a list of qualifying commercial and academic frameworks that can be used to provide certification examination preparation training to prepare participants to sit for the three ASP certification examinations.
• ASP will use these criteria to evaluate potential Registered Education Providers (REPs).
• ASP will use these criteria as part of the Richard Goodman Award criteria.
• ASP members and other interested parties can use these best practices to refine and improve their own product and service offerings.

To qualify for the ASP stamp of “Qualifying ASP Framework,” a candidate strategic planning and management framework, must meet the following best practice criteria. A scoring system (1 to 5) will be used to score each framework applicant and a score of 80 percent or higher will be needed to secure the “Qualifying” designation.

Attribute 1 – Uses a systems approach that starts with the end in mind. The systems approach includes: agreed-upon definitions of terms, an understanding of what is to be accomplished (outcomes), how desired outcomes will be accomplished (strategy, processes, human capital, and technology), how progress will be measured, and how results will be evaluated and corrective action taken. The systems approach incorporates strategic thinking, leading and leadership development, people, technology, processes, change management, rewards and recognition to incentivize desired behaviors, clear communication, inclusion and transparency, customer and stakeholder value creation, and organization culture. Feedback loops are incorporated to promote continuous improvement and learning, and a periodic cycle (e.g., yearly) is established to refresh the system. A discipline to get things done turns systems thinking into strategy execution and action.

Attribute 2 – Incorporates change management and leadership development to effectively transform an organization into high performance. Organization culture change is built into the fabric of the process and led by senior leaders (e.g., the board, C-level executives, and managers) rather than treated as an add-on for the Human Resources Department to address after the system is developed. Roles and responsibilities are defined, as are governance policies and procedures. Employee internalization of “what’s in it for me” is as important as “what’s in it for the organization.” Communicating necessary organization changes with clarity starts with a shared vision of the future and the senior leadership team and becomes everyone’s responsibility. Leadership development happens at all levels in the organization, not just at the C-level.

Attribute 3 – Provides actionable performance information to better inform decision making. Meaningful strategic and operational performance measures and targets, logically derived, are used to monitor progress against targets. Appropriate outcome (accomplishment), output (production), process (efficiency), project (schedule and resource adherence), and input (resource) measures are the basis for transforming performance data into performance information and performance information into business intelligence. Performance information is provided in a timely manner throughout the organization to better inform decision making at all levels, not just at the executive level.

Attribute 4 – Incorporates assessment-based inputs from the external and internal environments and an understanding of customers’ and stakeholders’ needs and expectations. Strategic thinking and discovery are used to describe the current situation in terms of the social, economic, political, competitive, technological, and regulatory factors affecting the organization. Possible future states are discussed and analyzed. Business strategy options for achieving the organization’s vision are derived from the external and internal assessments. Additional inputs include: mission, vision, core values, customer value and needs, competitive analysis and marketplace positioning, workforce competencies, organization culture, environmental and policy variables and guidance, and desired results.
Attribute 5 – Includes strategic initiatives to focus attention on the most important performance improvement projects. Prioritized initiatives (e.g., projects or programs) are developed consistently as part of strategy development and turned into risk-managed projects where schedule and resource adherence are tracked and reported, risks are identified and mitigated, and scope creep is managed.

Attribute 6 – Offers a supporting toolkit, including terminology, concepts, steps, tools, and techniques that are flexible and scalable for building and connecting the elements of the system in a consistent and integrated manner—horizontally across business and support units as well as vertically from the enterprise to the shop floor and the desktop. Uses efficient and effective automation systems to transform performance data into business information and intelligence and to document the strategic thinking process and deliberations.

Attribute 7 – Aligns strategy and culture, with a focus on results and the drivers of results. Employees need to be part of system development so that everyone, not just the senior executive team, takes ownership of the system. The focus on unifying strategy should also include line-of-sight alignment of enterprise-wide strategy with departmental strategy and personal objectives; individual and collective accountability for results; and a shared vision of the future that can be translated into action for all employees. This future vision is based on input at all levels so that the vision created is actively supported as it cascades throughout the organization. Necessary changes are communicated with clarity throughout the organization, based on a communication and change management plan and strategy. The system reports on how well strategy is being implemented and the degree to which results are achieved, and corrective action is taken as required to improve outcomes.

Attribute 8 – Integrates existing organization systems and aligns the organization around strategy. The system is integrated into the organization’s structure and culture so that it meshes with existing project management, process improvement, and budgeting and other financial systems. Changes are made to the holistic system as new information becomes available, and the system focuses organization attention and effort on strategy. Strategy developed at the organization-wide level is cascaded down to business and support units and then to teams and individuals, to make strategy everyone’s job and build ownership and accountability for results.

Attribute 9 – Ensures that the system is simple to administer, is clear to understand and direct, and delivers practical benefits over the long term. The system uses common business language, logical structures, and documentation. Practical benefits, measureable results, and improved customer value are evident and demonstrable, and there should be evidence of use in a variety of business and industry, government, and nonprofit organizations. The system is not treated as a separate system—it becomes part of the organization’s culture.

Attribute 10 – Incorporates learning and feedback to promote continuous long-term improvement. The system has feedback loops built in, so the benefit of learning at both the strategic and operational levels can be incorporated, along with changes in assessment variables, into revised strategies and business plans. The system is flexible and sustainable, and improvements are incorporated when appropriate to create long-term enhancements.