# ASP Certification Candidate Handbook

## For Prospective Certification as a:

>>> Strategic Management Professional (SMP) — Level II

>>> Strategic Planning Professional (SPP) — Level I



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# WELCOME TO THE ASP CERTIFICATION PROGRAM!

**PART I: OVERVIEW OF ASP CERTIFICATION**

Strategy is a profession, not simply a task that organizations check off the list of things to do.  A lot rides on the quality of facilitated strategy sessions.  The function requires high-level skills, business acumen, and competency in the field of strategy.  How do you know if you've got what it takes to set your organization or your clients in a direction of relevance, profitability and sustainability in this dynamic period of change?   ASP has taken the initiative to create consistency and a benchmark for competency in our profession.

The Association for Strategic Planning (ASP) is the only global strategy association with a certification program. The purpose of our program is to establish a high-level of quality and consistency within the fields of strategic planning and management 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.  The Program is based on the ASP Standards, Competencies and Body of Knowledge Framework (BOK Framework 2.0) which was developed by leaders in the field of strategic planning and management to guide the certification of strategy professionals in the United States as well as internationally.

ASP offers two certifications, the Level I Strategic Planning Professional (SPP) and the Level II Strategic Management Professional (SMP).  Seeking certification is not restricted to ASP membership; non-members are eligible to apply for Certification.

ASP's family of credentials is driven by sound theory and practice in the strategy profession. Our Body of Knowledge (BOK 2.0) sets the baseline standard of knowledge that every strategy professional should have at their fingertips.


**1.0  WHO SHOULD CONSIDER ASP CERTIFICATION?**
- ✓ C-Suite executives in business, non-profit and government who engage regularly with strategy planning.
- ✓ Senior operational leaders responsible for business units who are engaged at the strategy table.
- ✓ Consultants who facilitate client strategic planning in the business, non-profit or government sectors.
- ✓ Finance leaders who are involved with financial strategy.
- ✓ Strategic marketing and branding professionals who engage in strategic alignment of a brand.
- ✓ Project managers (PMPs) who need strategy credentials.
- ✓ Human resource managers who are involved in talent development strategy.

## 2.0 WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO GET CERTIFIED BY ASP?

Motivation for learning is different for everybody.  Do you identify with any of these statements?

- I want to be at the top of my game.
- I feel that my relevance is slipping away.  I need to get up to speed.
- I want to bring more value to my organization.
- I need more confidence in strategy planning.  I want to feel like I know what I'm doing.
- I've been assigned a strategy job that I have no background in. The stakes are too high to mess up!
- I have a lot of on-the-job experience and applied business acumen.  I want to validate that for my resume.

In this time and place, how can we ever really prepare ourselves for the uncertainty that we face today?  Most of us learn on the job.  When we learn this way, we grab the pieces of the puzzle that will solve our challenges quickly.  But we only grab a piece of the puzzle.  How do you learn that the rest of the puzzle may be more relevant that the piece you grabbed just to get you through?

Achieving ASP certification is a signal to the world that you know what you are doing in the field of strategy.  Earning the designations of SPP or SMP after your name symbolizes that you understand the "thousand-piece puzzle" of strategy—not just the 50-piece beginner puzzle.

It is the study process—the preparation—where the intrinsic value is for you.  Holding that inner confidence that you know the best practices and methodologies in the field is powerful. Knowing that you can take your company's strategy planning to the next level creates value. Demonstrating that you meet the required competencies to attain the designation is a personal achievement.

## 3.0 WHICH CERTIFICATION SHOULD I PURSUE—SPP OR SMP?

**Strategic Planning Professional (SPP)**

- **Minimal Qualifications for SPP**
  - No discriminatory age or gender limits
  - **Two years of experience in strategy work where strategy is a primary function**
    - Has a developed understanding of strategy practice by working on multiple efforts related to strategy work?
    - Has applied best practices related to strategy in more than one effort.
    - Some experience in business and/or government and/ or not for profit organization(s).
    - Has developed an understanding of strategy work by participating in multiple efforts related to strategy.
    - Has applied best practices related to strategy on more than one effort.
    - Has led at least one strategy effort.
    - Is comfortable leading activities related to strategy work with some oversight.
  - Has familiarity with management theories and practice.
  - Has familiarity with some strategic planning schools and capable in a few.
  - Knows and can explain the difference between good management and good strategy.
  - Understands oversight and management of business evaluations.
    - Can create an evaluation process for strategy work.
      - Can evaluate current performance measures and metrics for efficacy.
      - Understands different types of performance measures and can create objective and actionable measures.
  - Can identify gaps and consults with experts in strategy as needed.
  - Can make reasonable recommendations based on performance measurement results.
  - Capable of preparing for, supporting, and following up on a strategic retreat for small, medium and many large organizations; beyond facilitation.
  - Has demonstrated business acumen, including:
    - Good intuition
    - Strong facilitation skills
    - Listening skills
    - Capable of learning industry fundamentals quickly
    - Organized
    - Motivated

**Strategic Management Professional (SMP)**

- **Minimal Qualifications for SMP**
    - No discriminatory age or gender limits
    - **Ten years of experience in strategy work, not simply in management, where strategy work (development, implementation, evaluation) has been a primary function in the job.**
        - Has led multiple efforts in strategy work without oversight.
        - Has a breadth of experience across business and/or government and/or not for profit organization(s).
            - Knows best practices and has demonstrated thought leadership related to strategy work.
        - Has demonstrated experience of oversight and management of business evaluations.
        - Has demonstrated the ability to offer insight into strategic alternatives, evaluate organizational culture, and evaluate likely success of a strategy, ability to see the projects required for change and success.
    - Familiar with management theories and practice.
    - Familiar with most strategic planning schools and very capable in some.
    - Strong knowledge and understanding of the difference between good management and good strategy.
    - Has demonstrated ability to define the methods to complete activities in strategy work and lead a process toward successful execution.
        - Has experience in identifying, planning and implementing projects to drive achievement of a strategic plan.
        - Routinely assesses changes or impacts related to strategy and adjust approaches and methods to assure a successful result in alignment with strategy.
        - Can evaluate current performance measures and metrics for efficacy.
        - Understands different types of performance measures and can create objective and actionable measures.
        - Can create an evaluation process for strategy work.
        - Can make reasonable recommendations based on performance measurement results.
    - Capable of leading a strategic retreat for small, medium and many large organizations; **beyond facilitation.**
    - Has demonstrated business acumen, including
        - Good intuition
        - Strong facilitation skills
        - Listening skills
        - Capable of learning industry fundamentals quickly
        - Organized
        - Motivated

**PART II: OVERVIEW: THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

When you decide to pursue certification through ASP, the process is far more than passing the exam. You must first qualify to take the exam by demonstrating your eligibility on the application which is reviewed by two certified professionals. The application is as important as the exam itself. Our Application Reviewers are scrutinizing whether you really have the background to be successful on our exams. If they feel that you do not have the experience to be successful in the level you have chosen, they will advise you to take the appropriate level of exam.

The second critical step on the certification journey is your study plan. It is important to familiarize yourself with all of the theorists identified in the Body of Knowledge 2.0 *(which can be downloaded from the ASP Website here: www.strategyassociation.site-ym.com/store/ViewProduct.aspx?id=4660938).* When people do not pass the exam, it is often obvious that they were not familiar with key theorists in the fields of management and strategy. The application inquires about your study plans. Your answer to this question does not influence the eligibility score on your application, but how and what you study greatly predicts your score on the exam itself. Application Reviewers may offer you coaching to enhance your study plan for success.

The third step is taking the actual certification exam that contains 160 multiple choice questions over a three (3) hour timeframe. The exam is in English and contains college level English and strategy jargon. While our reach is world-wide and our family of credentials is available globally, we recognize that for success on our exams, you must have language fluency in reading college level English and interpreting multiple choice questions from an environment where English is the language of business.

***Please note: If English is NOT the language of management in your country, be aware that successful performance on our exams require superior business English proficiency.***

**4.0  WHAT DO THE CERTIFICATION EXAMS TEST FOR?**

The examinations assess competencies in four domains: Lead, Think, Plan and Act. Further, the facilitative role that strategy professionals play underlies these domains.

Content for the SPP includes competencies in Essential Leadership Skills such as Personal Credibility and Interpersonal Skills, as well as Content, Process and Context in the areas of Think, Plan and Act. The SMP includes these internal consulting essentials but primarily focuses on competencies covering advanced leadership such as Planning Team Work, Cross-Functional Teams, and Organizational-Wide Leadership, plus C-Suite level concepts and activities in the Think, Plan and Act domains.

Here is an example of how the competencies are differentiated between the two levels of certification. The competencies below are from the *Think* Domain. The full list of competencies is contained in Appendix A of this handbook.

| Level 1: (SPP) Strategic Planning Professional | Level 2: (SMP) Strategic Management Professional |
|---|---|
| **The candidate should know and/or understand how to:** | |
| 1  Design a **future global environmental scanning** system and process utilizing accepted methodologies for today's global competition. | Provide **strategic intelligence** to senior management to lead competitive advantage and strategy discussions, ending with consensus decision making, where possible. |
| 2  Ensure that enterprise-wide **risk management,** scenario planning, portfolio analysis, and futuring are part of the strategic planning process. | Evaluate different **strategic alternatives** to develop a uniqueness that creates value for their customers and a competitive advantage for the organization. |
| 3  Support full **economic and portfolio analysis** of tentative/alternative strategic directions to ensure their viability, growth, and sustainability. | Assist senior management with the development of their **vision and mission/purpose, core values,** and long-range direction for the future. |
| 4  Assist senior management with industry and organizational **structural analysis** in search of a better business model | Assist senior management with **value chain management analysis**, **sustainable value chains,** and business models that drive entrepreneurial behavior. |

In general, the exam content is organized in four domains as follows:

| Domain | Domain Content, such as management and strategy theorists | Processes in the Domain such as ""how to" or best practice | Infrastructure required to successfully function in the domain |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Lead | | | |
| 2.  Think | | | |
| 3.  Plan | | | |
| 4.  Act | | | |

## 5.0  WHAT IS THE STEP BY STEP PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION SUCCESS?
1.  Decide which credential is right for you and assess whether you meet the eligibility requirements for your chosen credential by downloading and reviewing the current application from www.strategyassociation.org. (The application is also contained in Appendix C)

2.  *If you do not meet the eligibility requirements, develop a plan of activity that will get you to eligibility.  You may need to teach your chapter colleagues, publish an article, attend a strategy conference, register for a course of study.  Applicants for both the SMP and SPP credentials need to describe a strategy case study that you led.  You may need to plan to do a case that will fit the requirement.*

3.  *Before completing your application, determine how, what and when you will study for this exam.  Download and review the BOK 2.0.  Decide if you will register for an online or face to face course with one of* ASP's Registered Education Providers (REPs), *or if you will form an informal study group with other colleagues in your company or your chapter.  Keep reading for further study plan suggestions.*

4. If you believe you have met all the eligibility requirements for your chosen credential, complete and submit your application for review before the deadline of your desired testing date.  [Deadlines are posted on the ASP website.](#)

5. If your application is INCOMPLETE, it will be returned to you with comment about what is missing.  Resubmissions must be received BEFORE the published application deadline.

6. If all required documents are submitted, your application will be reviewed by at least two reviewers who must agree that you are eligible for your chosen credential.  If you need more work experience or education, the reviewers may recommend an alternative path for you.

7. While you are waiting for your application to be approved, begin your study plan implementation in earnest.

8. When you get notice of eligibility to take the exam, register for a specific date during the two-week examination cycle with the official test center in your area.  Show up on the scheduled date and take the 160-question multiple choice exam.  It will take a few weeks to get your results.

9. Pass the exam, receive and display your certificate of achievement, send a press release to your local media, and enjoy the moment!

10. Develop and implement a plan for continued formal and informal education to maintain your certification.  Recertification is required every three years for the SPP designation and every five years for the SMP level.

## 6.0 WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

- Visit [www.strategyassociation.org](http://www.strategyassociation.org) and select Certification from the menu
- Email your questions to [certification@strategyassociation.org](mailto:certification@strategyassociation.org), or
- Call 1.844.345.2828

Our certification administrators are based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.  Office hours are from 8:30-5:00 in the Eastern Time Zone.

## 7.0 ASSESS YOUR READINESS TO CERTIFY

**Step 1: Scan and plan for minimum experience eligibility.**
ASP certification requires experience and preparation.
- At our level 1 SPP certification, you will need to meet these minimums:
  - o 2 years (minimum) in an internal planning role or as a junior external planning consultant, and a Bachelor's Degree or 5 years work experience in strategic planning or related field
- At our level 2 SMP certification, you will need to meet these minimums:
  - o 5 years (minimum) as an experienced internal Executive or external Consultant leading multiple Strategic Planning assignments and a College Graduate or 10 years work experience
- *Please note: Management experience does not equal strategy experience. For example, it is management work to implement a customer profitability management system. It is strategy work to determine what kinds of customers do we want to target to optimize results. Does your* **strategy experience** *meet these minimum levels?*

If you don't meet these minimums, you might want to create a plan to systematically expose yourself to resources, including books, people, chapter events, and webinars that will ground you in the strategy field.

**Step 2: Prepare a Certification Study Plan.** Use a project management approach.
- **Conduct an environmental scan, then plan your specific approach.**
  - ✓ Note the deadlines for the application submissions and exam test dates. **Decide on your target exam cycle.**
  - ✓ **Check out the available material on the ASP website**. Be sure to download the Body of Knowledge 2.0 (BOK 2.0) or the specific section related to your desired level of Certification.
    - ▪ **Take note of the Glossary, Further Reading and References identified in the BOK 2**.0. The key resources identified in the Body of Knowledge are a starting point for your study plan.
  - ✓ **Download the Self-Assessment** for your desired level of certification to identify what you need to learn and where to focus your study efforts.
    - ▪ **Use the competency outline, located in Appendix A of this Handbook as a self-assessment. Identify your gaps in knowledge and craft your study plan around filling those gaps of knowledge.**
  - ✓ **Review the Sample Exam Questions** on the ASP Website to gain familiarity with the kinds of questions for which to prepare. Sample questions for each exam can be found in Appendix B.

- **Step 3: Build a specific study plan**. Study for this exam just as you would for any academic degree. It should include the following:
  - ✓ **Consider what is the best study method for you?**
    - ▪ Are you an entrepreneurial learner where you have the discipline to create your own plan and work that plan…going it alone as long as you know what to study?
      - • If so, you may be a good candidate for self-study or self-accelerated online learning.
    - ▪ Are you a collaborative learner where you really appreciate talking about concepts and hearing how others interpret and illustrate the ideas?

- If so, you may be a good candidate for classroom learning and/or an informal study group in your chapter, your company or virtually.
  - Are you a systematic learner where you like things in bite sized chunks and a consistent study routine?
    - If so, you may be a good candidate for facilitated online learning or a local study group.

✓ **Identify which resources/theorists you need to become familiar with.** You may choose to read the book or access a summary of key concepts of the author.

✓ **Identify a specific time of the week that you will study.** Will it be during your lunch hours? Will you come to work early three days a week to get an hour of study in before the workday? Will this be a weekend commitment? Identify a specific block(s) of time and record it in your calendar so you don't give that time away.

✓ **Think about how you will keep notes.** For many learners, handwriting or mind-mapping your notations makes information stick. For some, it is reading, then translating the concepts into your own words on some computer application. Some people like to go out and buy a really cool spiral notebook for note-taking…make it fun for you and make the ideas stick as you study.

✓ **Consider <u>where</u> you will study.** Some people find that a library atmosphere allows for better concentration. Others prefer a quiet atmosphere and sitting at a table. Some prefer an easy chair… be intentional about where you study. Consider the atmosphere and where you will be able to focus and process of lot of complex content.

✓ **Consider if you need a mentor.** You may be able to find a mentor in your local ASP chapter, in your company, or you might contact a certified professional near your local area. See the current list of SPPs and SMPs at *http://www.strategyassociation.org/page/CertProfessionals*

✓ Be sure to **note your application deadline date on your calendar**. It will take you some significant time to complete the application. It requires qualitative responses to demonstrate you meet the eligibility requirements to sit for the exam.

✓ **Then once you've established your exam readiness…**

| Submit Completed Application | Study BOK 2.0, join study group or preparation course. Read recommended books and articles, attend webinars. | Receive notice of eligibility, then register for test site. | Take and pass the exam |
|---|---|---|---|
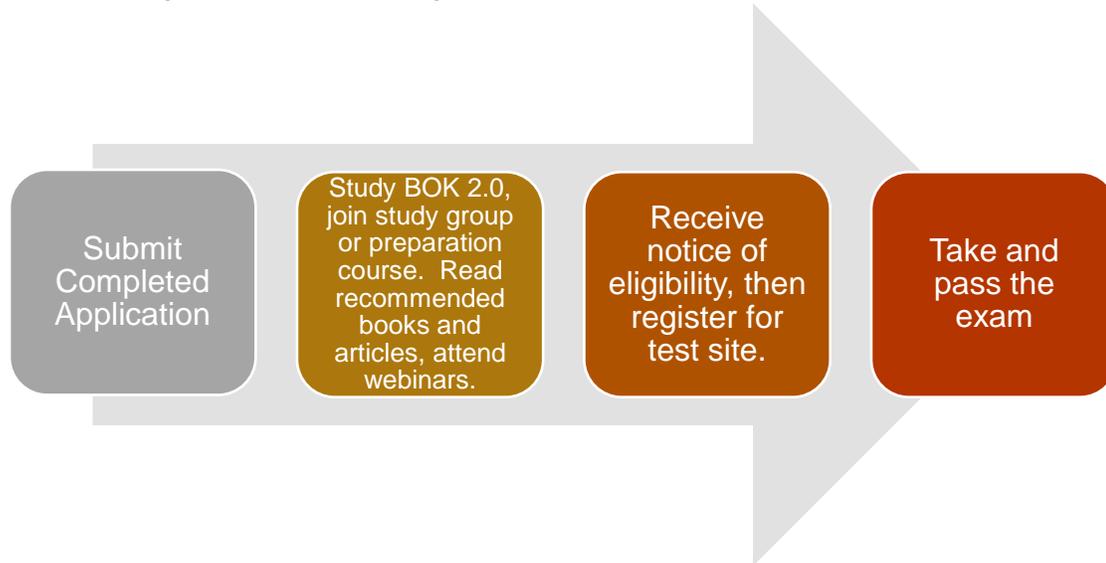
## 8.0 WHO CAN HELP ME PREPARE FOR THE EXAM?

ASP approves **Registered Education Providers (REPS)** who offer coursework in alignment with the ASP certification exams.  Virtual and face to face courses are available.  See the ASP website for the current list of approved providers, their products, and their contact information.

### 8.1 How to Form a Study Group

You have a few options to form an informal study group to prepare for the ASP certification exams.

1. Let your local chapter leaders know you are looking for peers to form a study group.  They will help you locate others in the chapter who are in the same pursuit.
2. Convince your peers to go on this journey with you.  Make a commitment inside your company to do this together.  Sharing the journey will make you a tighter team and a stronger department.
3. Let your HR department know you are pursuing strategy certification.  Department personnel may be able to support you in finding compadres to mentor or study with.
4. Post on LinkedIn that you are looking to form an online study group.  Virtual study groups can be just as effective as in person. Feel free to join ASP's LinkedIn Group and look for a study group there.

### 8.2  How to Form a Chapter Study Group

1. Find a local Chapter. ASP Chapters are listed on the website under the "Chapters & Communities" tab.
2. Post an announcement in the appropriate Chapter Group through the ASP website, using the Chapter's "forum".
3. Establish a study group lead or co-leads who will organize the meetings, create a list of attendees, ensure that they are serious, and divide the review material into topics to be divided among the participants.

4. Poll the participants to determine whether they prefer to meet virtually or face-to-face. Establish a consistent location and time, if possible, to facilitate group members being on-time.
5. If meeting virtually, it will be very helpful to use a virtual meeting package such as GoToMeeting, "Live Meeting,", Webex , Zoom or Google Hangout.  If meeting face-to-face, it is helpful to find a location with a projector and whiteboard, wall or screen.  Suggestions include member offices, local library or local establishment meeting rooms. Otherwise the presentations will either need to be printed or viewed on participants' iPads or computers.
6. Choose review materials carefully. Several registered educational representatives have developed study guides with practice exam questions. A list of these materials are available from ASP.
7. Assign topics to each member or, if the group is large, to two or more participants to prepare a presentation for the group.  If a presenter ends up with a conflict, it is his or her responsibility to inform the group lead and to work with them to change the schedule or swap topics with another member.
8. Meet for a sufficient amount of time to allow the presenter to present the topic and then to work through relevant test questions.  Part of the learning will be to work with each other not only on content but also on test taking strategies.
9. Depending upon the date and time of the meeting, you may wish to coordinate refreshments, or agree for everyone to bring his or her own.
10. Make it fun.  Discuss practical applications of the topics covered, and, if possible, bring in members who have passed the exam for advice.

## 9.0  FURTHER APPLICATION COMPLETION, STUDY AND EXAM TIPS

### 9.1 Application Completion Tip

The Qualifying Application requires thoughtful completion. If you are a manager, we cannot assume that you are doing strategy work. On your application, it is important to connect the dots between your education and experience to the field of strategy. Reviewers will be assessing whether your experience and business acumen are sufficient for you to be successful on the exam.

The information you provide will help reviewers assess how well you use your knowledge of strategy For example, could you, as an SMP, lead the strategic planning offsite workshop for a medium size organization?  Please be sure to connect the dots between your background and the field of strategy.  Be explicit when you list your education, professional experience, business acumen and in your case study.

### 9.2 Study Tips

1. Create a structured plan for your study and work your plan.
2. Identify someone who will hold you accountable for completing sections of your study plan. It might be a mentor, a co-worker, or one of your children.  Studying in front of your children establishes you as a role model as your children do their homework.

3. Organize your notes in the four domains of Lead, Think, Plan and Act with each domain having three sub-categories: Content, Process and Infrastructure. If you can organize this way, you will be able to see gaps in your study effort.
4. Use the competencies in Appendix A as a self-assessment AND as a final review tool.
5. You may find it helpful to review key concepts and terms using a set of flashcards. You can make your own with the term on one side and the definition on the backside OR you can purchase flashcards on the ASP Website. (Projected for Spring Cycle 2018).
6. It is human nature that when you read independently, we tend to notice all the information that proves we are right rather than noticing new information. If you choose to self-study, you want to be very intentional to notice *what's different* in the readings than what we already "know".

### 9.3 Exam Tips
1. Good exam questions always have a plausible distractor which is an answer option that seems like a possible answer. An individual who is prepared can detect the distractor and rule it out as the correct answer option. Be ready for answers that sound plausible, but are really trying to distract you from the correct answer option. For example, you might have an answer drawn from an analytical thinking process and one drawn from a systems thinking process. We recommend that when it comes to strategic planning, your best option would be in the systems perspective. If the question is more about project management, then the analytical perspective is likely best.
2. In North America, the ASP exams are completed on a computer at the test site. Exams offered outside of North America will be paper and pencil exams where you must fill in a bubble sheet identifying the correct answer option.
3. In a multiple choice exam, you have to recognize the correct answer, not create it. If you have engaged in a reasonable study process, you will likely recognize the right answer for many of the questions. However, some questions are a bit more complex. We recommend on those questions, you may want to use the true/false method with each answer option. On a piece of paper, process the answer options by marking a T for True next to the option number or an F for false. That process may help reduce re-reading options unnecessarily, thus reducing your fatigue level during the exam.
4. You have 180 minutes to complete 160 questions. Work at your pacing as you prepare for the exam. Try to complete at least one question per minute. The exam is not a race and there is no extra credit for completing it in less than 2 ½ hours. When you read too fast, it is very easy to misread the question. So find the pace that is right for you.
5. Sometimes you will be able to narrow down the four answers options to two plausible answers. If one of those answers can be contained in the other, go with the broader concept.
6. Fatigue will likely set in as you sit and read for three hours. Let's face it, few of us sit for three hours just reading! You may take a break to revive yourself. A break might include leaving the room to go to the bathroom OR it might be just sitting back in your chair, closing your eyes and doing some deep breathing. Do what you need to do to stay alert and productive during this test. Just be sure to factor that break into your timing so you don't run out of time to complete the exam.
7. Our exam vendor, PTC, also has published rules for the exam sites. You will receive the complete list of rules when your test site is confirmed. Be sure to read that communication

carefully.  One of the newest rules is that you CANNOT wear an Apple watch or Fitbit while taking the exam. And, of course, you cannot have a smartphone in the test site.
8. Use the PTC Testing Software Demo at http://www.ptcny.com/cbt/demo.htm to experience the basic features of the electronic testing software.

## 10.0 MUCH THIS WILL COST? *(as of Jan 1 2018)*

| Fee Structure (payable only in USD) | For ASP Members | For Non-Members |
|---|---|---|
| **Qualifying Application Fee (Non-Refundable):** **For SPP and SMP credentials** *Fees must be paid prior to commencement of application review activity* | $175 | $275 |
| **Candidate Exam Fee:** **For SPP and SMP credentials** To be paid ONLY after Qualifying Application is approved *Fees must be paid in order to receive exam admission confirmation* | $450 $600- (International Candidates outside of North America) | $600 $750-(International Candidates outside of North America) |
| **Retake Exam Fee:** | $300 $400 (International Candidates outside of North America) | $475 $650 (International Candidates outside of North America) |
| **Candidate Exam Fee Group Discount:** *May only be applied when a minimum of four candidates register in one batch\** | Volume discount for exam applications submitted for the same exam cycle and paid from a single billing, For 4-7 $ 75 off each exam fee. For 8-14 $100 off each exam fee For 15+, $125 off each exam fee **\*To qualify for the group discount, an official representative of the group must contact the ASP Certification Administrator at** certification**@strategyassociation.org** or call 1.844.345.2828. | |

**PLEASE NOTE**: All certification fees are non-refundable.

## 11.0 EXAM DATES AND APPLICATIONS DEADLINES

ASP Certification Exams are offered twice a year: during the first two full weeks of May and the first two full weeks of November.  Test centers are identified by our Testing Service, PTC, in locations around the globe.

Application deadlines are the first Friday of February and November for those testing **outside** of North America.  For those testing in North American locations, the application deadline is the fourth Friday of February and November.

Once the application is approved, then examination fees are due.  Once this fee is paid, then an Exam Admission Confirmation is issued. Candidates must then register for a test site with our testing service, PTC, within four weeks of the application deadline.

*See the ASP website, www.strategyassociation.org/certification, for specific dates.*

## 12.0 TEST CENTER LOCATIONS

To find the nearest Testing Center, go to http://www.ptcny.com/cbt/sites.htm.

While anyone may look for possible Test Center locations at any time, Candidates CANNOT request a specific site location without the Eligibility Number given on the PTC Eligibility Notice. This notice is only sent to Candidate after the Test Center Application is processed by ASP and then PTC. Candidates should allow up to TEN business days from date of submitting PTC Test Center Application and paying Exam fee before initiating a follow-up inquiry about the receipt of Eligibility Notice; however Eligibility Notices are not sent until SIX weeks before the beginning of the testing period.

### 12.1  For International and Special Needs Applicants
Deadlines for applications requesting a non-US or Canada testing location or special accommodations are due no less than **four weeks before standard deadlines**. Therefore, ASP Qualifying Applications must be submitted no less than twelve weeks before the requested testing period and the Test Center Applications submitted no less than eight weeks before the requested testing period.

### 12.2  Special Requests

#### 12.2.1.  International Test Centers (for Non-US/Canada locations)
It may be possible to establish a special testing center to take a paper and pencil examination in an Exam Candidate's own country for a surcharge of $100 - $150 USD to cover administrative costs. A special test center request form (provided by ASP) must accompany the PTC Testing Center Application and specify preferred city and country. International Exam Candidates requesting a non-US or Canada testing location must submit their PTC Test Center Application to ASP no less than EIGHT weeks before the testing period to provide the additional time necessary to set up an international location. An International Exam Candidate's ASP Qualifying Application must therefore be submitted no less than TWELVE weeks before the testing period.

#### 12.2.2. Special Needs Individuals
Special Testing arrangement will be made for Candidates with special needs. With the Test Center Application, submit a completed and signed Request for Special Accommodation Form, available from www.ptcny.com or by contacting PTC at 212.356.0660.  Requests for special testing for individuals with special needs must be received no less than EIGHT weeks before the testing period begins.  A Special Need's Applicant's ASP Qualifying Application must therefore be submitted no less than TWELVE weeks before the testing period.  There is no surcharge to request special test accommodations for special needs individuals.

### 12.2.3. Rescheduling Your Assigned Examination Appointment

Once ASP forwards Test Center Application forms to Professional Testing Corporation, Candidates approved by ASP become formal PTC Candidates for the next upcoming testing period. PTC Candidates may reschedule to a different date within this two-week testing period, free of charge. However, to transfer to a different two-week testing period, Candidates must pay a transfer fee of $150. This fee is based on cost and is not punitive. There are no refunds of application or exam fees.

## 13.0 RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT

When you successfully pass the exam, you will receive a telephone call or letter from the Certification Department with the good news. You will also receive a digital version and a hard copy of Proof of Certification as well as a certified lapel pin. Additionally, your name will appear on the ASP website as a certified individual and you will be acknowledged during the ASP Annual Conference, generally held in May each year.

## 14.0 UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES

If you were unsuccessful on the exam, you will receive a telephone call and a letter outlining your overall raw score and the score by domain. We recommend you create a new study plan based on your results. You may retake the exam during the next test cycle upon notification to ASP and payment of the retake fee.

It should be noted that on average the pass ratio for all students taking the exam during a test cycle is between 65-75%. If everyone passed, that would be an indicator that the test is too easy and that it does not differentiate knowledge and competencies appropriately.

Appeals of exam results are only possible for paper and pencil exam forms to assure the hand-scored exams were accurately counted. Computerized test results may not be appealed.

# SECTION II: CERTIFICATION GOVERNANCE

## 1.0 SPONSORING ORGANIZATION

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

ASP is managed by Managing Matters, an association management company with Headquarters located at:

411 Richmond Street East, Suite 200, Toronto, ON
M5A 3S5
Toll Free: 1.844.345.2828

The ASP Board of Directors is responsible for certification budgeting, personnel contracts, marketing and communication to support certification and any major changes in the certification program.

## 2.0 ASP CERTIFICATION GOVERNING STRUCTURE

In accordance with the Association Bylaws, certification activity is governed by the ASP Certification Commission.

The Commission is a seven-member body, initially appointed by the ASP Board in 2017. The panel includes five ASP Certified professionals and two public members. To avoid conflicts of interest, the Commission may not include individuals involved in broad strategy education who prepare candidates for certification.

The Commission is the decision-making authority for essential operational decisions related to certification including the examination content, process and qualifications, Standard Operating Procedures, fees, policy, appointment of sub-committees, application assessments, qualifying and communicating with Registered Education Providers and relationship with the examination vendor, recertification and appeals.

The Commission has three sub-committees with authority to create special task forces as needed:
- The **Application Review Committee** conducts application reviews and meets semi-annually to look at overall application process and make recommendation for improvements to the Commission;
- The **Item Writing Committee** meets semi-annually to expand the exam bank, determines the difficulty of exam items and oversees the development of new exams.
- The **Certification Operations Committee** meets at least monthly to oversee the certification process infrastructure & make policy recommendations

Individuals who become certified may be involved in these components. Active participation in Certification governance can be used as qualifying points for recertification at either the SPP or SMP levels.

A **Program Director** shall be identified to conduct the day-to-day administration of the entire Certification Program and shall report to the Certification Operations Committee.

The Program Director shall be the sole contact with applicants and a coordinating contact with other entities involved in the Certification Program.

The Certification Commission shall contract with an **independent testing company** that will manage the ASP Exam Testing Program.

## 3.0     DIRECTIONAL POLICIES

### 3.1 Our Vision
A prevalence of strategic planning professionals certified by ASP worldwide.

### 3.2 Our Mission
Quality competency-based certification exams and exam experience for people engaged in strategic planning and management, offered world-wide.

### 3.3 Our Intended Outcomes
The ASP Certification Commission exists so that employers and educators, acting in the public interest, have testing mechanisms for assessing current competencies in the field of strategy development, formation and execution.

This is further defined, in order of priority as:
   Employers have confidence that the testing mechanisms for assessing competencies are reliable, valid and defensible.
- They recognize that testing mechanisms measure current strategy knowledge, judgment and skills.
- Examination candidates/applicants are able to participate in the examination process within a reasonable amount of time and at a reasonable price. They will:
   - Have clear, defensible criteria for examination eligibility;
   - Have clear, accurate and comprehensive exam parameters;
   - Take an exam that is free of bias;
   - Receive feedback that identifies areas for improvement if candidates are unsuccessful to demonstrate eligibility on the application or competency on the exams.
- Employers, educators and professional strategists will recognize and champion the quality, validity and reliability of ASP certification.

### 3.4 Source of Exam Content
The Program is based on the ASP Standards, Competencies and Body of Knowledge Framework (BOK 2.0 Framework) which was developed by leaders in the field of strategic planning and management to guide the certification of strategy professionals internationally. The Body of Knowledge will be reviewed at least every three years for relevance to current strategy practice.  The Certification program does NOT oversee the review of the BOK; this is done by a Thought Leadership Committee of ASP.

### 3.5  Diversity/Non-Discrimination Statement
The ASP Certification Commission is committed to diversity and equality in all activities.  The

Commission, in both its values and practices, is committed to providing the strategic planning community with credentialing practices that are based on inclusion and diversity.

This means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the ASP Certification Program on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or disability.

The ASP Certification Program will seek diversity and inclusiveness in its business practices and it will not condone any form of unlawful discrimination.

The ASP Certification Commission recognizes and values the diverse skills, perspectives and experiences of the strategic planning community and believes inclusiveness enhances the Commission's ability to serve this community.

## 4.0 OPERATIONAL POLICIES

**4.1 Confidentiality**.
As the ASP Certification governing and management components administer the certification program, volunteer committee members and ASP paid staff will at times learn of confidential or sensitive information regarding the exams, applicants or certificants including, but not limited to, such information as exam items, test scores and disciplinary actions. This information is to be kept confidential and secure in perpetuity and should only be discussed when necessary with other committee members or staff or as necessary in the context of a disciplinary proceeding. All committee members and volunteers with access to such information shall sign a security/confidentiality agreement prior to commencing service on any ASP Certification component and shall retain ASP certification information only so long as necessary to complete any required tasks. Security/confidential agreements will be retained by ASP headquarters.

1. The agreement will require these individuals to maintain in strict confidence any and all information related to ASP Certification Program discussions and decisions unless prior approval is given by the Commission Chair or such information is made publicly available. This confidential information includes (but is not limited to) information related to the following:
   (a) Applicants and Applications, both new and renewal
   (b) ASP Certification Program decisions and actions related to applications.
   (c) Item bank and exam development
   (d) Disciplinary actions and appeals
2. Certification applications and candidates' performance on the examination shall remain confidential unless otherwise stipulated by the examinee or as required by law. The Program Director will release The SPP/SMP Program exam application and pass/fail information to the applicant only with a personal contact when possible and confirmed in writing. Notifications may be sent by electronic means when appropriate.
3. The exception to this are the published list of SPP/SMPs that the ASP Certification Program makes available to the public and confirmation of SPP/SMP status. This statement does not preclude the publishing of any certificant name against whom disciplinary action has been taken.
4. All such confidential information shall be maintained in a safe and secure place. Reasonable steps will be taken to protect against inadvertent disclosure or theft of information.

5. Upon termination of service with the ASP Certification Program, the individual will destroy any confidential information received or acquired relating to the certification program and confirm the destruction with ASP Certification Management Team Chair.
6. Any work done by an individual on behalf of the ASP Certification Program is a work for hire and belongs to and remains the property of the ASP Certification Program.
7. Volunteers involved in examination development (including subject matter experts) will be given limited access to confidential exam materials as needed to perform their exam development duties. All volunteers will sign a nondisclosure agreement prior to being granted access to any confidential materials.

## 4.2 Conflicts of Interest

All Certification volunteers and staff will execute a conflict of interest statement. On the conflict of interest statement, the individual will notify the Commission of any such conflicts of interest and any business, financial, personal, and/or organizational interests and affiliations which are or could be perceived to be a conflict of interest with the ASP Certification Program.

For a period of at least one (1) year after ASP Certification Program volunteer service, employment or contracted services *with access to any exam items* offered on behalf of the program, the individual will not become directly involved in any preparation or presentation of instructional materials or programs designed to prepare persons to complete the certification process.

To avoid conflicts of interest in the application process, members of the Application Review Team may not review applications submitted from individuals they personally or professionally know.

## 5.0 ANNUAL REVIEW OF FEES RELATED TO THE ASP CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Fees related to certification will be reviewed annually by the Certification Commission and approved by the ASP Board of Directors, as a function of certification budgeting. Revised fees will become effective on the first of January in the new calendar year. Applicants who pay fees prior to January 1 will be eligible for the prior year's rate.

## 6.0 QUALIFYING APPLICATIONS

## 6.1 Late Applications

Applications received after the published deadlines for international and North American submissions will become eligible for the subsequent testing cycle.

## 6.2 Application Reviews

Each Qualifying Application is independently reviewed by two members of the Application Review Committee who assess the applicant's education and work experience in relation to the extent and relevance to strategy work and to determine eligibility for the requested credential level. Reviewers may make recommendations to the applicant regarding appropriate exam level and suggestions to enhance the applicant's study plan. Reviewers shall hold application content and determination of eligibility confidential from any third-parties.

## 6.3  Appeals on Eligibility

Applicants who have been deemed ineligible to sit for an examination may appeal in writing to the ASP Certification Commission.  The letter must be accompanied by supporting documents. The appeal must be received within 10 days after the notice of ineligibility is sent to the non-approved applicant. At least two Certification Commission appointees will review the appeal and notify the applicant in writing of its decision within 10 days of receipt of the written appeal.  To re-apply after 90 days, applicants must re-submit their Qualifying Application with a new Application Fee.

## 7.0  USE OF THE CERTIFICATION TITLE

1. Only individuals who are currently certified may use the titles of Strategic Planning Professional (SPP) or Strategic Management Professional (SMP).
2. Use of the title and credential by individuals who have not been awarded the recognition or who have failed to maintain the credential through the renewal process is strictly prohibited.
3. The title and certification is an individual recognition and may not be used to imply that a firm is certified.
4. The titles of Strategic Planning Professional (SPP) or Strategic Management Professional (SMP) are trademarked property.  Its use is subject to approval by the ASP Certification Commission.
5. Individuals inappropriately displaying the ASP certifications credentials will be subject to possible legal action.

## 8.0  REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION

### 8.1 Ethical Behavior

ASP expects recipients of its certifications to behave in ways consistent with commonly held characteristics of ethical behavior.  Documented breaches of ethical behavior are the bases for revocation of certification.

The following is a summary of behaviors which may lead to disciplinary review.
1. Conviction in a court of law of a felony which may affect public health or safety
2. Fraud or deception in attempting to obtain a certification
3. Misrepresentation of certification status
4. Irregularity in connection with any Board examination
5. Failure to pay recertification fees or provide information required by the ASP Certification Commission
6. Misuse of ASP credentials, examinations, and other intellectual property
7. Demonstrated incompetence upon a series of complaints

### 8.2 Disciplinary Action/Revocation of Certification

Violation of the ASP policies or a breach of ethics may lead to disciplinary action, including (but not limited to) the actions listed below:
1. Denial or suspension of eligibility
2. Revocation of certification
3. Non-renewal of certification
4. Reprimand
5. Suspension of certification

Disciplinary action, including revocation of certification, must follow due process where notice is served to a certificant and a disciplinary hearing is held. The certificant is entitled to be heard by a panel of three certified peers and an appeals process is available.

### 8.3 Disciplinary Review Process

When violations occur, the Program Director shall bring the information about potential disciplinary action to the Certification Operations Committee who will appoint a three member panel drawn from the Application Review Team to review the situation. To preserve integrity of due process, no member of the Certification Commission will be assigned to such a panel. Decisions may be appealed to the Certification Commission with 30 days.

## 9.0   REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

The Association for Strategic Planning requires that you re-certify every three years for SPP and every five years for SMP to ensure that you maintain that a relevant knowledge base over time. Re-examination is NOT required, however, it is expected that strategy professionals will have completed a broad range of activities to remain current in strategic planning and management.

A separate *Recertification Handbook* is available with instructions for filing your renewal application.

We do recommend that you create a file titled *ASP Recertification.* This file should be used to keep track of any activity that you participate in that may qualify you for recertification points.

Activities that qualify are:

- Participating in strategy-related courses offered by colleges or universities, Registered Education Providers (REPs), or employer sponsored courses.

- Attending ASP events at any level: international, chapter, community of practice, in person or virtually.

- Attending other organization events that encompass strategy topics

- Learning independently, reading books/articles or listening to lectures on strategy-related topics

- Serving as a volunteer to ASP

- Serving on Boards where you can apply your strategic planning skills

- Working as a strategic planner or in a senior organizational role with strategic planning content as part of the position

- Authoring a book, chapters in a book, or article on strategy or strategic planning

- Teaching courses or speaking at organized events focused on strategy or strategic planning.

- Developing new work or theories of strategy

# ASP Candidate Handbook

# Appendices

**Appendix A: Identified Competencies for Certification Success**

**Appendix B:**

    **Sample Test Questions for the SPP Exam**

    **Sample Test Questions for the SMP Exam**

    **Answer Key for Both Sample Test Questions**

**Appendix C: Qualifying Application**

## Appendix A: Identified Competencies    Source: ASP Certification Competencies, BOK 2.0

| Competencies Required to Pass the ASP Certification Exam(s) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Domain** | | **Level 1: (SPP)** <br> **Strategic Planning Professional** | **Level 2: (SMP)** <br> **Strategic Management Professional** |
| | | The candidate should know and/or understand how to: | |
| **Lead** | 1 | **Set goals** and opportunities for his/her own **lifelong learning and continuing education** in the field. | **Practice participative planning department management** through involving others and building consensus. |
| | 2 | Develop and maintain **a balanced life** (bodymind-spirit). | **Facilitate the thinking, planning, and implementation work** of groups in meetings, task forces, and department teams. |
| | 3 | **Act with conscious intent** by deliberately guiding his/her behavior in accordance with a personal vision and values. | **Educate managers, employees, and teams** (regarding thinking, planning, and implementation). |
| | 4 | **Commit to ethical practices and high professional standards** by acting with consistency, honesty, high integrity, and civility in all aspects of life. | **Guide and support communication with department** management and employees about the strategic and annual plan to ensure "buy-in" for implementation. |
| | 5 | **Take inventory** of themselves by knowing their style, strengths, and weaknesses and have flexibility to change as circumstances permit. | **Lead an effective planning department team** of both management and employees alike. |
| | 6 | **Develop a personal vision, goals, and personal strategies** for his/her life and career. | **Promote better planning department problem solving** and decision making as a role model for the organization. |
| | 7 | **Develop personal credibility** through having the courage of their convictions to confront dysfunctional behavior. | **Create, charter, and support cross-functional teams**, projects, and task forces. |
| | 8 | **Show empathy, caring, and respect** by respecting the feelings, emotions, and perspectives of others. | **Support and integrate business processes** based on anticipating and delivering customers' wants and needs for quality products and services. |
| | 9 | Communicate **effectively** and actively through listening actively, questioning others, and giving and receiving honest and effective feedback. | **Institutionalize strategic thinking tools and critical th**inking across functions in a more holistic and effective manner. |
| | 10 | **Mentor and coach others** by helping them be accountable and achieve better results. | **Manage planning processes effectively** through sound project management skills. |
| | 11 | **Manage conflict** by influencing and persuading others and him/herself toward a "win-win" solution. | **Foster a culture of innovation and strategic thinking** throughout the organization. |
| | 12 | **Be innovative and creative** in strategic thinking, strategic and annual planning, and strategic implementing of change as well as continuous improvement, as well as support creativity in others. | **Foster networking, knowledge transfer,** and the development of a learning organization across the entire organization. |

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| 13 | **Build and adhere to a reputation** for integrity, ethical behavior, and fairness to others. | **Support the organization's vision, values, and competitive position** in the marketplace and strategies to achieve them throughout the organization. |
| 14 | **Facilitate better problem solving** and decision making between individuals, seeking consensus where possible yet not allowing compromises on strategic direction. | Support organization design professionals and senior management to **effectively redesign and restructure the organization chart to align it with the strategic plan** for day-to-day responsibility and accountability. |
| 15 | | **Coordinate communications of strategic content** through senior management and communications staff relying on a range of channels and methods. |
| 16 | | **Align planning and implementation tasks with accountability** for their achievement at all levels. |
| 17 | | **Support cultural change and transformation** to create a customer-focused, high performance, adaptive organization. |
| 18 | | **Organize and design the change management infrastructures and change processes** of the organization to smooth out strategic plan implementation and effective change management. |
| 19 | | **Be a change agent/advocate and advisor** to management during strategic implementation. |
| 20 | | **Assist the organization in being flexible and adaptable** to changing environments, demands, and deadlines. |
| 21 | | **Guide effective sourcing, application, and sharing of knowledge** and learning across the organization. |
| 22 | | **Ensure that the underlying business model and processes** for the organization **are aligned** with the desired changes arising from the strategic plan and its implementation for strategic planning. |

| Domain | | Level 1: (SPP)<br>Strategic Planning Professional | Level 2: (SMP)<br>Strategic Management Professional |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | The candidate should know and/or understand how to: | |
| Think | 1 | Design a **future global environmental scanning** system and process utilizing accepted methodologies for today's global competition. | Provide **strategic intelligence** to senior management to lead competitive advantage and strategy discussions, ending with consensus decision making, where possible. |
| | 2 | Ensure that enterprise-wide **risk management,** scenario planning, portfolio analysis, and futuring are part of the strategic planning process. | Evaluate different **strategic alternatives** to develop a uniqueness that creates value for their customers and a competitive advantage for the organization. |
| | 3 | Support full **economic and portfolio analysis** of tentative/alternative strategic directions to ensure their viability, growth, and sustainability. | Assist senior management with the development of their **vision and mission/purpose, core values,** and long-range direction for the future. |
| | 4 | Assist senior management with industry and organizational **structural analysis** in search of a better business model | Assist senior management with **value chain management analysis**, **sustainable value chains,** and business models that drive entrepreneurial behavior. |
| | 5 | Gather **customer satisfaction information** and intelligence, especially regarding their wants, needs, loyalty, and retention. | Link strategic thinking with **strategic budgeting** to ensure a focus on the future and opportunities versus sunk costs. |
| | 6 | Assist the collective management team in developing and using a **common framework and language** to become a strategy-oriented organization attuned to the frequency of the business' dynamic nature and processes. | Guide the **dissemination of acquired knowledge** to the entire organization in a form that is useful. |
| | 7 | Provide **benchmarking** and best practices research on what works or does not work. | Provide the necessary and specific holistic **strategic thinking framework** to ensure better strategic decision making. |
| | 8 | Focus the organization on **strategic goals and measurements** for its short- and longterm success. | Provide the needed **strategic thinking context** to keep it separate from the day-to-day tactical and pressured world of business. |
| | 9 | Promote **ethical considerations** as part of the strategic thinking process. | **Organize meetings** with a single agenda item on difficult and chronic strategic issues affecting the organization. |
| | 10 | **Draw quiet people out safely** and ensure open and frank communications in strategic thinking sessions. | **Involve a broader array** of middle management and others in the strategic thinking process as a learning experience while ensuring there is no "dumbing down" result. |
| | 11 | Lead **virtual teams** to openly discuss strategic thinking topics. | Conduct **strategic deliberations** through an understanding of group dynamics, personalities, facilitation, good questions, and assistance in consensus and closure. |

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| | 12 | Foster a **culture of creativity and innovation** as part of the strategic thinking process. | Challenge existing assumptions and **confront the logic** of all involved, including senior executives. |
| | 13 | **Focus on keeping things simple** (simplicity wins the game every time) as it is a way to make an organization more strategic yet faster and cheaper. | Facilitate **conflict management** in order to persevere through difficult discussions and chronic issues that have no easy answers. |
| | 14 | Guide **near-term trend and competitive/industry analysis** to be able to strategize in dynamic and evolving global markets. | Assist senior management with **redefining industry boundaries** if necessary, including scenario planning or modeling to transform and create new market space. |
| | 15 | Utilize proactive **pre-work and pre-meetings** to tailor and sequence the organization's Think-Plan-Act framework to ensure that all senior and middle management understand and use the same process. | Assist senior executives in identifying the **unintended consequences** within every strategic discussion in the complexity of today's world. |
| | 16 | | Provide a **systemic approach** to strategic thinking during future environmental scanning and clarify the desired outcomes before moving forward with any analysis, problem solving, or decision making. |
| | 17 | | Teach the senior management first, the rest of management second, and the entire workforce third in **thinking strategically** as a better way to be strategic on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. |
| | 18 | | Design a **Strategy Management Office** to guide the strategic thinking—strategic planning—strategic implementation processes. |
| | 19 | | Design a **strategic management system and yearly cycle** as a way to run the business day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, and year-to-year while thinking dynamically and tuned to the frequencies of the business. |

| Domain | | Level 1: (SPP) Strategic Planning Professional | Level 2: (SMP) Strategic Management Professional |
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| | | **The candidate should know and/or understand how to:** | |
| **Plan** | 1 | Guide the design and implementation of a good **corporate strategic plan** and understand best practices as to why good ones work and bad ones do not work. | Facilitate **the art of strategy identification,** evaluation, and selection. |
| | 2 | Advise on identification and evaluation of different options to grow **the top line** (sales/revenues). | Guide the creation of a marketplace **competitive advantage** and how to strengthen it. |
| | 3 | Advise on different methods to **lower costs**, increase profit margins, and improve cash flow and the balance sheet. | Influence the **strategic direction** and vision of the organization as well as the determination of core strategies to achieve this direction. |
| | 4 | Conduct a **future environmental scan** and ensure it is global in scope to capture the worldwide dynamic trends of strategic significance. | Cascade goals and core strategies into corporate-wide **annual top priority strategic action items** and annual department plans to achieve these goals/core strategies. |
| | 5 | Use quantitative tools to **conduct decision analysis**, modeling, and risk management to support executive decision making. | Ensure that a **yearly strategic management system** integrates with the corporate budgeting and financing processes as well as HR rewards and recognition systems. |
| | 6 | Explain the concepts and principles of the **premier theorists and practitioners** in the field of strategic planning, both in history and the current field of planning, including the major schools of strategy as well as the newer emerging ones such as Balanced Scorecard, Blue Ocean Strategy, the Knowledge Economy, the Systems Thinking Approach, etc. | Articulate the **importance of brand/reputation** and support the development of plans to strengthen this. |
| | 7 | **Leverage, align, and cascade the corporate direction** into three-year business plans for all strategic business units and major functional areas. | Assess market opportunities, strategic alliances, and new **business development challenges**. |
| | 8 | **Use goal setting and metrics** extensively with targeted goals to track and measure "smart" outcomes. | Create viable and mutually exclusive **strategic alternatives** and best strategies using carefully chosen criteria. |
| | 9 | Articulate the importance of the organization's distinctive **core competencies** and strategies that result in a competitive advantage versus MOS (more of the same). | Facilitate a thorough **financial analysis** of the organization's financial health and human resources. |
| | 10 | Assess the degree to which the **corporate culture** will obstruct or enable implementation of the strategic plan and adjust accordingly. | Focus the organization on the most critical issues to address. |

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| | 11 | Integrate, communicate, and **cascade all the strategic planning components** into an annual planning and budgeting process across and down the entire organization. | Facilitate a **top management planning team process** led by the CEO that appropriately involves the board of directors and other key internal and external stakeholders. |
| | 12 | Identify and explain at least two of the **different methodologies for strategic planning** that follow the Lead-- Think—Plan—Act process. | Build necessary **relationships across countries, cultures, languages,** and continents with global sensitivity, awareness, and sophistication. |
| | 13 | Conduct an effective **current state assessment** (such as a SWOT analysis), including status of the organization with respect to its competitors. | Facilitate **effective decision-making processes** in plan development. |
| | 14 | Understand the strategic planning process that starts with the **desired outcomes** such as the ideal future vision, mission, core values, and desired competitive advantage/positioning to set a future direction for the organization. | Facilitate a process to **uncover and clarify the organization's core competencies** and any gaps. |
| | 15 | Understand how to use **scenario planning and modeling** to anticipate and make sense of changes happening in the world and their impact on the organization. | Install a timely preplanning process to "**engineer success upfront**" in the planning process. |
| | 16 | Support, communicate, and audit the **organization's core values.** | Set up a planning infrastructure whereby the **core planning team** is led by the CEO and includes all members of senior management within a manageable size so they can be productive. |
| | 17 | Facilitate formulation of the **vision and mission statements to** be clear in defining "why the organization exists" (its purpose) including who its future customers/clients are and what products and services it will provide them. | Install a **Strategy Management Office** structure/staff person(s) to guide the strategic planning (Lead--Think—Plan—Act) process. |
| | 18 | Provide an annual **department planning process** that is in a line of sight linked to the corporate strategic plan. | **Coordinate and integrate** specific structural linkages between strategic plans and operating plans for appropriate performance, results, and associated rewards. |
| | 19 | Articulate numerous ways to **involve all key internal and external stakeholders** in the process since people are willing to change when they are involved, not when change is imposed on them. | Develop specific frameworks and structures to build, review, and evaluate the links between the corporate strategic plan and **strategic business units** with three-year business plans. |
| | 20 | Guide relevant **research and required data collection** required in a timely fashion. | Coordinate a **merger/acquisition process or system** for the organization. |
| | 21 | **Utilize online and computer technologies** to facilitate and speed the strategic planning process. | |

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| 22 | Designate a corporate "**support team and functional cadre**" to ensure that the knowledge, timing, outcomes, processes, and infrastructures of planning and strategic management achieve the corporate-wide integration and leverage they require to ensure business success. | |
| 23 | Implement an **annual strategic planning review** and update of the system to ensure the continued improvement of the strategic planning process. | |
| 24 | Assist the organization in **keeping simple, clear,** and well understood language and terminology of the entire strategic management system. | |
| 25 | Work toward evolving **continuous improvement processes** that are in synch with rapidly changing global systems and events. | |
| 26 | Guide the design and implementation of a good **corporate strategic plan** and understand best practices as to why good ones work and bad ones do not work. | |

| Domain | | Level 1: (SPP) <br> Strategic Planning Professional | Level 2: (SMP) <br> Strategic Management Professional |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | The candidate should know and/or understand how to: | |
| **Act** | 1 | Leverage the fact that "**people support what they help create**" in supporting change across the entire organization. | Ensure that **change theories** and their application to the organization are taught and applied at all levels of management by subject matter experts including knowledge of behavioral science principles and change management applications. |
| | 2 | Ensure **teamwork and project management skills** are taught to those in the organization needing to effectively implement strategic plan projects and initiatives. | Facilitate a **line of sight** for the organization's goals and objectives across/down the entire organization. |
| | 3 | Take into account the importance of the **organization's culture** when planning/implementing organizational change. | **Facilitate changing the culture** of management and employees. |
| | 4 | **Break down long-term strategic plans** into annual and project plans. | Facilitate ways to motivate and **incentivize people**. |

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| 5 | Keep the organization abreast of **new emerging theories** and methods of creating customer value, including listening to and involving customers to create such value. | Foster **innovation** in new product/services development. |
| 6 | Ensure the **application of quality management and customer service** best practices in support of the organization's strategic direction and core values. | Ensure that an **effective monitoring and evaluation system** is in place. |
| 7 | Foster ongoing communications processes and **involvement of all key internal and external stakeholders** so they "buy in" and "stay in" over time with the new strategic direction. | Ensure that a code of conduct has been developed and is properly communicated and enforced with all employees. |
| 8 | Set up a monitoring and **accountability process and information systems** to track key success factors—"smart" goals and implementation of the change. | Follow **best practices in change management and overcoming resistance** to ensure that the change initiative succeeds. |
| 9 | Review progress and coordinate the **modification of the implementation plan** as needed. | Obtain the **commitment of the board, CEO**, senior management, and middle management to lead and support the strategic change. |
| 10 | Provide mechanisms, including **lessons learned**, that ensure the process is **improved over time**. | Guide senior management in understanding the **impact of change** on all aspects of the organization and the need to appropriately "keep up the pressure" for change so employees don't slip back to old routines. |
| 11 | Serve as the **trusted advisor to project teams** and continuous improvement teams as they implement the strategic initiatives throughout the year. | Facilitate the development of a **change game plan** that can be fully supported by senior management before the formal change and implementation process begins. |
| 12 | Identify and engage the **key stakeholders** that will drive the change and the best practice structures. | Facilitate **reward and accountability systems at all levels** to support the change initiative. |
| 13 | Work with the CEO and CFO to ensure that adequate **funding and resources for the required change** initiatives and infrastructures are in place. | Assist senior management in **making effective critical decisions** to drive change based on valid information and objective analysis. |
| 14 | Guide the development of **regular change leadership teams** at all unit levels as appropriate. | Ensure that the needed **rewards and recognition structures** for the new strategic direction are in place and reinforced at all levels of the organization. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 15 | Establish an effective **portfolio management system** to support the strategic plan initiatives and projects. | Facilitate an organization-wide **change leadership team** that is led by the CEO, supported by the strategy management office, and meets monthly. |
| | 16 | Assist senior management in developing and executing an **annual implementation schedule** (corporate yearly calendar). | Set up and run a **strategy management office** to coordinate the entire strategic plan change effort in support of the CEO and change leadership team. |
| | 17 | Convey the concept that an organization is a system wherein **all components of the system are interrelated**. | Identify and install other **change infrastructures/teams** (such as an employee development board, IT steering group, facilities management team, etc. as appropriate). |
| | 18 | Support ideas to ensure **employee engagement and attunement** of their hearts and minds in support of the strategic direction. | |

## ASP's Strategic Planning Professional (SPP)
## Sample Test Questions

### BOK Content: 1.2.6 Lead UNQ: 00179

*Competency: Build and adhere to a reputation for integrity, ethical behavior, and fairness to others.*

**Question 1** Which of the following is **NOT** a conflict resolution style?
1. Compete
2. Command
3. Collaborate
4. Compromise

### BOK Content: 2.1.5 Think UNQ: 00140

*Competency: Gather **customer satisfaction information** and intelligence, especially regarding their wants, needs, loyalty, and retention.*

**Question 2** Which of the following is the most critical measure of customer satisfaction?
1. Customer service calls
2. Customer complaints
3. Customer satisfaction scores
4. Customer retention and referrals

### BOK Content: 3.1.3 Plan Content UNQ: 00058

*Competency: Advise on different methods to **lower costs**, increase profit margins, and improve cash flow and the balance sheet.*

**Question 3** Attaining behavior control to enable the implementation of a strategic plan involves the key levers of
1. Pay and vision.
2. Integrity and education.
3. Culture, rewards, and boundaries.
4. Cost leadership, ethos, and behavior.

### BOK Content: 4.1.2 Action UNQ: 00281

*Competency: Ensure **teamwork and project management skills** are taught to those in the organization needing to effectively implement strategic plan projects and initiatives.*

**Question 4** What are the stages of project management?
1. Defining, planning, executing, delivering
2. Defining, preparing, executing, divesting
3. Developing, proposing, executing, debriefing
4. Defining, problem-solving, executing, driving

**Appendix B - SMP**

## ASP's Strategic Management Professional (SMP)
## Sample Test Questions

### BOK Content: 1.5.5 Strategic Leader UNQ: 00193

*Competency: Support **cultural change and transformation** to create a customer-focused, high performance, adaptive organization.*

**Question 1** Which of the following is **NOT** a technique used to change a culture?
1. Changing the values of a company
2. Reinforcing the values of a company
3. Changing behaviors of individuals in the company
4. Changing employee beliefs about the core values

### BOK Content: 2.4.2 Strategic Thinking UNQ: 00238

*Competency: Evaluate different **strategic alternatives** to create a uniqueness that creates value for their customers and a competitive advantage for the organization*

**Question 2** It is the strategic planning facilitator's role to
1. Lead participants toward the most profitable solutions for the company.
2. Evaluate participant values in relation to the company's value statements.
3. Evaluate the company's offerings as compared to those of their competitors.
4. Ask thought-provoking questions to help participants seek alternatives.

### BOK Content: 3.4.1 Strategic Planning Processes UNQ: 00181

*Competency: Facilitate **the art of strategy identification,** evaluation, and selection.*

**Question 3** Which of the following is **LEAST** important with respect to successful implementation of a strategic plan?
1. Creation of an organization-wide strategic plan
2. Integration of the strategic plan with annual operating plans and budgets
3. Integration of strategic plans with the accounting and financial reporting systems
4. Cascading of plans to the organization's performance and rewards management system

### BOK Content: 4.5.5 Strategic Action Processes UNQ: 00281

*Competency: Facilitate **reward and accountability systems at all levels** to support the change initiative.*

**Question 4** Why is it **most** important to have both accountability and rewards to support the change initiative?
1. Accountability ensures that good performance is a reward in itself
2. Accountability without rewards can feel like punishment when change is uncomfortable
3. Rewards reinforce positive aspects of strategic change so accountability is not needed
4. Accountability and rewards help change be accepted and implemented

**SPP Sample Exam Questions Answer Key***

#1 = 2

#2 = 4

#3 = 3

#4 = 1

**\* Note**: These questions will **not** be on the exam. The exam will **not** include showing the Body of Knowledge Content Areas (for example, **Lead)** and their task codes (for example, **1.2.6**). They are shown here for you to see the connection from the Body of Knowledge to the exam itself.


**SMP Sample Exam Questions Answer Key***

#1 = 1

#2 = 4

#3 = 3

#4 = 4

\*Note: These questions will **not** be on the exam.  The exam will **not** include showing the Body of Knowledge Content Ares (for example, **Strategic Leader)** and their task codes (for example, **1.5.5).**  They are shown here for you to see the connection from the Body of Knowledge to the exam itself.

**Appendix C: Qualifying Application**