

FAQs: ASSE's Proposed Governance Structure

ASSE's Board of Directors (BOD) has approved in principle a new governance model and is seeking member feedback. This model is designed to help ASSE be nimble, to accurately forecast and meet member needs as they arise; flexible, to respond quickly to changing circumstances; effective, to make a difference for members and the profession; and efficient, to make the most of the Society's resources. As this model has been introduced over the past few weeks to members, some common questions have arisen. PS shares those questions and their answers here.

Q: ASSE and the safety profession are growing and the Society is fiscally sound. Why change?

A: Systematic review is a fundamental principle of the SH&E profession. Many of the standards you work with each day require routine reviews that identify concerns and drive continuous improvement. Thus, it is prudent that ASSE examine its management system (i.e., governance) regularly to confirm that it aligns with an ever-evolving strategic plan and priorities as well as the Society's ongoing mission, and be responsive to various internal and external factors.

ASSE last reviewed its governance structure in 1993, and the House of Delegates approved that plan in 1995. That means it's been nearly 20 years since ASSE formally addressed this topic. Given the changed world and evolving operating environment, maintaining the status quo would equate to governing ASSE with a model that does not align with our mission, vision and strategic plan.

Research and best practices in association management suggest that a smaller, more diverse and strategically focused board is a more efficient and forward-thinking board. Progressive membership organizations are adopting a governance structure that is more responsive, strategic and sustainable. As the Society moves into its second century, we are striving to embrace this new view of organizational governance so that ASSE can be more responsive to the strategic plan as well as to the changing needs of a global, technology driven profession.

The proposed structure would also better align ASSE leadership with current member desires and needs. It will enable ASSE to provide greater support to and streamlined responsibilities for member leaders who have limited time to volunteer. By making better use of volunteer resources and by engaging more members as volunteers, ASSE will have access to broader skills and experience levels, and a larger pool of individuals will be available for ASSE leadership roles. A forward-thinking BOD, coupled with improved operational support at the council, region, chapter, practice specialty/branch and common interest group levels, will produce higher overall value for all members.

Q: What changes within the Society are driving this action?

A: In the mid-1990s, ASSE's membership was smaller, younger and less demographically diverse. During this time, members were more likely to attend chapter meetings and volunteer for service. Employers were more likely to pay

a member's dues (maybe even multiple dues to multiple organizations), send members to professional development events and support volunteer service.

Since then, our membership has greatly diversified. In addition, most members now interact with ASSE based on industry- and specialty-specific needs, rather than on geographic location. This is evident in the growth of ASSE's practice specialties (few and small in 1995, now approaching 20 in total) and emergence of common interest groups (which did not exist before 2003).

In addition, in 1995, ASSE was only beginning to venture into the virtual world, and had a limited website and few digital assets. Today, the Society delivers virtual events throughout the year, has an extensive website and has developed a robust Body of Knowledge repository.

Q: What changes in the SH&E profession are driving this action?

A: The list of things that have changed in your life in the past 18 to 20 years is likely quite long, with new changes occurring almost daily. It's no different for the SH&E profession.

Consider just a few comparisons:

- In 1995, safety professionals focused primarily on safety and OSHA compliance. In 2012, they have additional responsibilities for security, environmental health, business strategy and global management.
- Mergers and acquisitions have led to consolidation and downsizing. As a result, everything needs to be done quicker and better, but with fewer resources.
- Since 1995, ASSE membership has grown by more than 15%, and the number of ASSE's practice specialties has grown 112.5%. In addition, the number of ASSE members who belong to at least one practice specialty has grown by 34.7% since 1995.

• Common interest groups (CIGs) did not exist before Women in Safety Engineering was formed in 2003. Today, more than 5,100 members belong to ASSE's four CIGs.

• In 1995, most safety professionals relied on OSHA regulations or American voluntary national consensus standards as part of their practice. In 2012, SH&E professionals must review and be aware of a diverse range of global standards (e.g., OHSAS, ISO).

Q: Can you explain the process the BOD followed to get to this point?

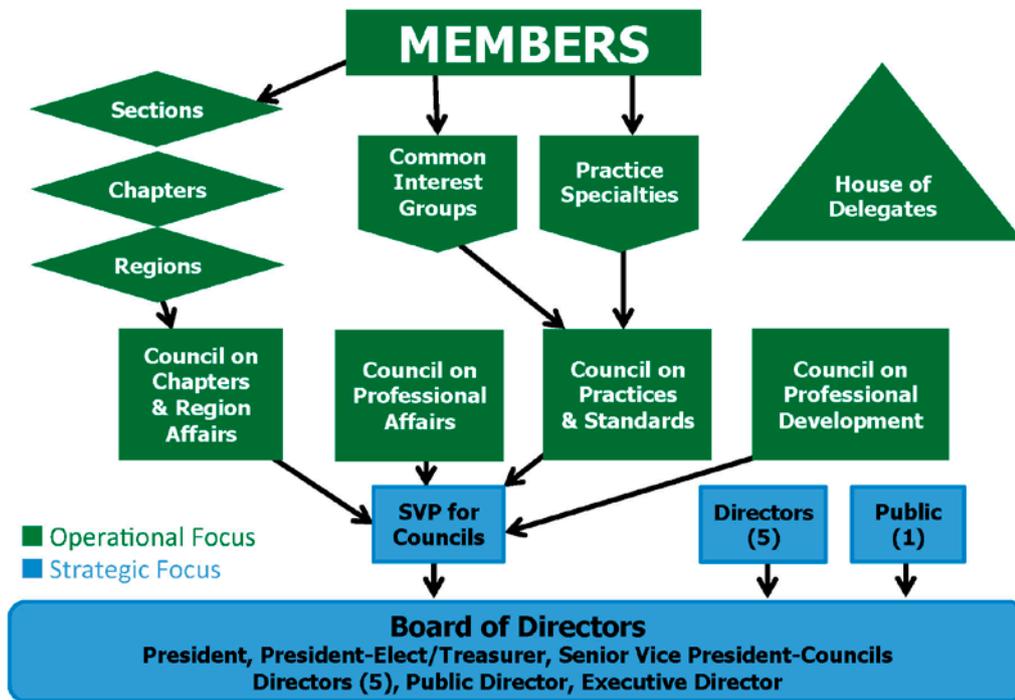
A: This journey has been driven by the collective wisdom of ASSE members, shared throughout an open, transparent process that has played out over the past 3 years.

The process started in 2010 when a Board Advisory Task Force began to examine governance. After several meetings, many discussions and a review of relevant literature, as well as extensive consultation with an association governance expert, the task force recommended a smaller board based on flexibility, responsiveness, strategic focus and economics.

Based on that recommendation, a diverse focus group met in January 2012. This group included the BOD, several past presidents, volunteer leaders and members at-large.

The proposed model is designed to help ASSE be nimble, flexible, effective and efficient.

Proposed Governance Model



Key Changes

- Decrease BOD from 16 to 10 members.
- Add one public member.
- Elect 8 BOD members Society-wide.
- Separate governance function from operations function.
- Eliminate the Executive Committee.
- Expand regions (anticipated) for additional chapter support.
- Operate practice specialties and common interest groups more transparently.

Along with the expert facilitator, this group discussed current trends, member demographics, business factors, political/social values and the global climate. It also performed a comprehensive condition assessment and reviewed the Society's goals. This collaborative and iterative process led to a consensus model for a new structure that was subsequently updated based on feedback from several volunteer groups.

In May 2012, a smaller group reviewed and updated the draft model that was presented to the BOD in June 2012. Between June 2012 and January 2013, the BOD continued to deliberate and consider additional input on the draft model. In February 2013, the board and its governance expert discussed further updates, and the board approved in principle a revised draft model. That model, with key differences highlighted, is depicted above. (Visit <http://restructure2013.asse.org> to view ASSE's current governance model.)

Q: Why this model?

A: In light of the changes in the SH&E industry and the world, it has become clear that ASSE's current board structure overemphasizes operational issues, causing silos and reducing the focus on strategy. As depicted in the image above, the proposed model separates operations from strategy. It allows the BOD to focus on strategy, while freeing regional and council vice presidents to be more responsive to their regions, members, councils and other constituent groups. This proposed organizational hierarchy will enhance communication and make ASSE a more nimble organization.

It is important to note that in the current structure, the regional vice president (RVP) position is too broad in scope and the expectations are burdensome, especially when combined with BOD duties. RVPs wear multiple hats that cause them to be overextended in many ways. One ultimate goal of this restructure is to increase the number of regions and RVPs in order to redistribute the operational workload more effectively. It is expected that doing so will increase efficiencies and ensure that each ASSE chapter gets more of its RVP's time and attention.

Throughout this process, member needs and insight have been the guiding force, and this model will allow for better member representation through various channels based on many factors, including where they live (chapters and regions); who they are (common interest groups); and where they work and what they do (practice specialties and branches).

This structure also reflects best business practices, and it will allow the BOD and other volunteer leaders to respond more effectively and efficiently to the needs of members and the profession. The addition of five at-large directors (all ASSE members) will bring members' voices directly to the BOD. Practice specialties and common interest groups will have a greater voice in governance as well, an important change as more members are electing to engage with the Society via these channels. Furthermore, adding a public director, a common practice in the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, will bring a different perspective to the BOD's deliberation and enable ASSE to access an expertise/experience not commonly found among the membership.

Q: What's in it for me as an ASSE member?

A: Bottom line: Better representation, more opportunities for engagement and a stronger organization. The proposed structure will create efficient engagement opportunities. As a result, ASSE will be better able to engage you and all members based on who you are, what you do and where you work. In addition, this structure will strengthen two-way communication and encourage constructive feedback that will foster a culture of trust between and among all stakeholders in the Society.

By creating a smaller, more diverse and strategic-focused BOD, ASSE will be able to more effectively recognize and capitalize on emerging opportunities that best serve the Society's mission and meet your needs as a member.

Please bookmark <http://restructure2013.asse.org> and regularly review the latest information about this initiative, discuss it with fellow members and share your feedback.