



### Deciphering the Organizational Structure of the ASA

Members are the driving force in every scientific society, and no more so than in the Acoustical Society of America (ASA).

We are blessed with unusually high member engagement. ASA succeeds because committed acousticians are willing to volunteer their intellectual capital and hard work to make things happen. An active and engaged community is ASA's greatest strength, with members as both our mast and our rudder. Because of this, in the ASA organizational structure, members occupy the top most tier.

Each spring, ASA members elect representatives to the Executive Council (EC), a governing body of 12 voting and 4 ex officio members: editor in chief, treasurer, standards director, and executive director (see <http://acousticalsociety.org/about/officers>). The EC serves in a leadership and governance capacity, overseeing the affairs of the Society. As such, it attends to the main responsibilities of working with members to establish a vision backed by a strategic plan, approving outcomes to be pursued, ensuring the resources needed to achieve those outcomes, and monitoring progress of strategy and policy. Equally important, the EC approves the annual budget and supervises the work of the ex officio members.

There are now also four Administrative Councils, each chaired by a member of the EC, that report to the EC (for a detailed discussion of the councils, see <http://acousticstoday.org/slp>). The Administrative Councils relate directly to each of the four main goals of the Strategic Leadership for the Future Plan (see <http://acousticstoday.org/slplan>): Financial Affairs, Member Engagement and Diversity, Outreach, and Publications and Standards. New and ongoing initiatives are vetted through these councils and then brought to the EC for a decision.

The executive director works collaboratively on both a strategic and a tactical managerial level with the president, EC, and volunteer leaders to ensure the success of desired outcomes.

In making the distinction between management and leadership, John Kotter (2012), the Konosuke Matsushita Professor Emeritus of Leadership at Harvard University said, "Management makes a system work. It helps you do what you know how to do. Leadership builds systems or transforms old ones." The president and EC provide primary leadership and oversight. Management is predominantly the responsibility of members (editors, committees, task forces, etc.), the executive director, and the headquarters staff. Working collaboratively, together we help realize the vision set forth in the Strategic Leadership for the Future Plan.

The ASA Technical Council (TC) is another fundamental component of the ASA organizational structure. Composed of the chairs of the 13 technical committees, the vice president, the vice president-elect, and the immediate past vice president, the TC is responsible for coordinating the policies and activities of the technical committees, provides liaison within the ASA on technical matters, and is the prime organizing body for the technical program presented at the spring and fall meetings. The TC is, in effect, ASA's "big tent" that draws together acoustic disciplines from across a wide range of fields.

For a scientific society as decentralized and actively grassroots driven as ASA, this organizational structure serves us extremely well. To operate effectively, we need a system that allows much freedom for our members to develop projects and ideas and also provides checks and balances to keep us charted on a course based on a clear vision by all. We have achieved that with the structure currently in place, and it is as efficient as it is robust.

### References

---

Kottner, J. P. (2012). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, MA, p. vii.