

Analysis of Strategic Issues — *Why are these issues important to AAJA?*

Building AAJA's Leadership Capacity to Change the Industry

AAJA has a very broad vision for how it will create an impact on the journalism profession. This involves advancing the interests of all Asian Pacific Americans by promoting representation and empowerment, and fair and accurate coverage of the APA experience.

AAJA is viewed by many as having the potential to be a major contributor to the shaping of journalism and the media industry, promoting representation and power for Asian Pacific Americans and other minorities. But AAJA is often seen as simultaneously possessing great reputation and credibility, but lacking visibility and profile.

Leadership is needed at a time when consolidation within media and journalism not only threatens the advances and progress made by APAs and other minorities, but casts doubt on the future for minority journalists. The “paper ceiling” issues still remains as an important issue facing Asian Pacific Americans in journalism.

AAJA could play a role as an organization uniquely positioned to influence change in the industry. Developing leadership means the following:

- ◆ Leadership is offering a critical eye to the momentum toward industry consolidation and convergence;
- ◆ While continuing to promote through its programs entry into, and retention and promotion in journalism, AAJA must decide how far it can go in promoting the kind of change needed in media and journalism to make fair representation a reality.
- ◆ APA community is also interested in taking up similar issues of representation and the fair and accurate coverage of the APA experience. AAJA plays a unique role in helping to lead and guide this work as the main APA organization in this arena. This connection with the broader APA community can strengthen this effort.
- ◆ There is an opportunity to define and expand the role of minority journalists association. Should AAJA be more involved, vocal, and active in promoting industry change? There is currently no consensus on how far AAJA should and can go.
- ◆ Finally, leadership means taking an active role in making the work of UNITY more effective, promoting the interests of all minority journalists in addition to addressing the particular needs of Asian Pacific Americans.

Strengthening AAJA's Base for Promoting Change

To advance a more intentional agenda for changes in journalism and the media, and increasing the power and influence of APA journalists, AAJA will need to strengthen its base—its current membership, and more broadly, all APA journalists.

AAJA's main responsibility is to its membership. Therefore, it must pay special attention to keeping this part of the base happy, and connected to the work of the organization as a whole. It must serve members' needs while simultaneously serving its larger, organizational purposes. This means carefully reassessing the needs and desires of membership, in all its diversity of interests (newcomers to journalists, veteran members, members seeking advancement into management, etc.).

But AAJA would also like its impact to reach APA journalists more broadly, whether currently members or not. This is the part of the base that will be important to promoting change in the industry.

AAJA is uniquely positioned to represent the interests of its members, and the broader grouping of APA journalists. However, this work will only be effective if AAJA maintains a healthy organizational infrastructure (programs, staffing, and financial stability), and becomes creative and innovative in serving the needs of its expanded base.

Finally, AAJA will need to strengthen its chapter structure as one of the most critical vehicles for the support and development of members.

Forging Connection with APA Communities

Changes in journalism and the media will only come about through leadership and collaboration. AAJA is seen, both inside and outside the organization, as one of the entities that can address the major change issues in journalism. To accomplish this, AAJA will need to have a deeper base within the APA community.

A stronger connection with APA organizations does not necessarily mean addressing any and all issues concerning Asian Pacific Americans; nor does it necessarily mean adopting an activist agenda. It does mean that AAJA should connect its issues and work with that of the broader APA community, and link to those issues that directly impact journalism and the media.

This connection can be built not only through issues, but also from maintaining ongoing relationships with particular communities and community organizations, and building AAJA's community visibility through educational work, events, trainings, and technical assistance.

Building the Capacity for Financial Sustainability

Perhaps the most obvious (and most commented upon) issue for AAJA is its long-term financial stability. The factors that supported that issue include the general state of the economy and its impact on charitable giving and fundraising, and the general challenges faced by nonprofits in maintaining long-range sustainability strategies. Simply stated, funding is always on the mind of every organization.

There are other factors that intensify this focus on the financial stability and health of AAJA. Consolidation and convergence in the media industry threatens the funding levels

from AAJA's media sponsors and contributors. As the declining U.S. economy fuels greater and greater consolidation, social responsibility dollars may also contract in the face of cost-saving strategies.

The internal needs for expanded programs, strengthening infrastructure, and increasing staff resources and support for programs also add additional long-range funding challenges.

The need to raise money, and diversify AAJA's funding base is not necessarily strategic in itself — this is a fact of life for all nonprofit organizations. What is a strategic issue, requiring important choices over the next five years, is which strategies for diversification AAJA will select.

The strategies should be built on AAJA's strengths: a loyal membership base, strong reputation and credibility, and good programs. AAJA as a whole, and the National Boards in particular, have already begun to take up this issue with commitment, enthusiasm, and energy.

Choices to be made by AAJA will include:

- ◆ Developing a more “entrepreneurial” spirit in its services and programming, and fostering programs that have a greater capacity to generate program fees-for-service;
- ◆ Resolving the issue of support from non-media sponsors and funding sources by developing clear guidelines for such support, and testing initial support with those sources that will respect the independence of the organization;
- ◆ Building the case for greater membership support through donations, events, gifts, and the possibility for building an organizational endowment. Implicit in any such strategy will be a clear relationship between fundraising efforts by local chapters, and fundraising for the national office/organizational structure.