



the
WESTERN
PLANNER

**Western Planning Resources Strategic Plan
2018 - 2023**

As Adopted by the WPR Board on September 28, 2018

Mission:

Provide a network of professional and citizen planners to share vital and relevant knowledge and educate our communities about the unique aspects of planning in the West.

WP's Goal:

Unite planning professionals separated by the great expanses of the West with a common vision and shared experiences to improve our communities.

A. BACKGROUND ON WPR

Western Planning Resources, Inc. (WPR) is a non-profit tax-exempt Wyoming corporation originally established in Montana in 1987. In 1989, WPR purchased *The Western Planner* from Western Planner founder Stan Steadman. Stan Steadman and many others created *The Western Planner* in 1979 with Stan Steadman continuing as managing editor until 1988. Other editors of *The Western Planner* have included David Conine, Steve Kurtz, Debbie Ehlers, and Rachel Girt. Digital versions of the Journal began in January 2015.

The initial member organizations in 1979 were Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming and were soon followed by APA Colorado (1980), Utah (1980), Nebraska (1981), Washington (1982), Western Central Chapter of APA (1983), Alaska (1984), and Idaho (1984).

Western Planning under the Subscription Model

Up until 2016, there were three categories of membership: sustaining, affiliate, and contributing. The status of a state's membership was tied to the cost and benefits of receiving the Western Planner Journal.

Sustaining Members. WPR distributed five editions of *The Western Planner* annually to all of the members of sustaining organizations at a cost of \$25.00 per member. In 2016, there were three sustaining organizations: North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Starting in January 2015, sustaining member organizations received both print and digital versions of *The Western Planner* at no additional cost.

Affiliate Members. Individual members of affiliate organizations were able to subscribe to *The Western Planner* at a discounted rate of \$30.00 per year. Since *The Western Planner Journal* was not provided to all members of the affiliate organization, the number of subscriptions was usually less than 20 per organization. The ten affiliate members in 2016 included Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Oregon, and Utah. Alaska, Montana, Nevada, and Washington previously changed their membership status from sustaining to affiliate. Starting in January 2015, members of affiliate organizations were able to choose either a print or digital version of *The Western Planner* at either \$25.00 or \$15.00, respectively.

Contributing Members. The Western Central Chapter of APA, which includes Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, was a contributing member.
Individuals. Individuals who are not members of a participating organization paid \$40.00 for an annual subscription.

Western Planning under the Donor Model

The Western Planning Board voted to transition from a subscriber model to a donor model in 2016. The concept requests contributions from state organizations, businesses and individuals to defray the cost of editing and publishing digital articles on the Western Planning Resources website. At the same time, publication of the Western Planner Journal, in both digital and printed form, was stopped. In place of the digital or printed journal, email recipients now receive links to monthly articles located on the website.

The Treasurer's and Editor's reports for 2018, indicate Western Planning Resources received \$12,560 in donations.

WPR Board of Directors

The Board consists of representatives from western states and contributing organizations. Currently, there are Board Directors representing 14 organizations and six At-Large Directors. The By-Laws authorize no fewer than 5 Board Directors and At-Large Directors can make up no more than 50% of the number of directors representing participating organizations.

By-Laws. The WPR By-Laws were last amended on January 15, 2011.

Previous Strategic Plans. There have been at least three strategic plans (1994, 2004 and 2015). A strategic planning retreat was held in 2011 when the WPR Board adopted a new strategic plan.

WP Conferences. There has been an annual WP Conference every year since 1980. The WP Conferences are held as joint conferences with the host state organization. In 2018 the WPR co-hosted a conference with the APA Tribal and Indigenous Planning Interest Group. The conference was coordinated by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Planning Office.

B. 2015 -2020 WPR STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

1. Increase WPR's exposure and relevancy in all Western States
2. Increase the value of the Western Planner Journal to our current subscribers and to attract new subscribers
3. Continue to promote sound planning practices in Western states
4. Diversify our revenue sources and increase our financial stability

5. Clarify and delineate the responsibilities of the WP editor and the treasurer and document their roles in a revised WP Handbook.
6. Expand the role of the board secretary to include maintaining an updated membership list for subscriptions and other purposes.
7. Continue to revisit our WPR organization By-Laws to consider the options for restructuring and membership that will help us achieve the other goals of this strategic plan.

C. CURRENT ISSUES

- Increasing Exposure - Western Planner needs to ensure a consistent stream of articles from its readership as well as encourage attendance at its joint annual conferences. Increasing the number of recipients of the monthly e-news exposes more western planners to the benefits of the organization and provides a larger pool of potential authors and conference attendees.
- Sustaining the Organization – The composition of the Board of Directors is designed to ensure there is representation from western states and key stakeholders. Each Director has an obligation to engage its state organization or peer group for ideas, opinions and articles that would complement the mission of WPR. It is also necessary for the Directors to promote the benefits of membership and seek continued support of WPR with their and seek donations from individuals, state organizations, their broader membership, and their sponsors. Internally, the Directors have a responsibility to educate and support new Directors so they feel welcomed and well-informed.
- Financial Stability – Beginning in 2016, WPR migrated from a subscription-based organization to one relying substantially on donations from state organizations, firms and individuals. Joint state conferences also continue to be a mainstay of revenue. As of 2018, WPR is able to stay on budget but continued income will require obtaining ongoing donations and ensuring quality joint conferences.
- Annual Conferences - These events have provided substantial revenue subsidy to WPR often making up subscription deficits. Recent WP conferences have used contracts and varying revenue-sharing formulas with host states to assure a reasonable rate of return to WPR. Conferences held in conjunction with larger states or regional conferences have the potential to expose many more western planners to our organization.
- Relevancy and Value to Western Planners – Unlike any other planning organization, the WPR has a primary mission to serve planning professionals in the western United States. This is accomplished through timely and informative articles and annual conferences. Another valuable aspect of WPR is giving planners the opportunity to network among their peers. It is important to WP to obtain informative, peer-reviewed articles relevant to western planners. It is also critical that WPR continues to host annual conferences in locations or with themes that encourage high-quality presentations and good attendance.

WPR STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS FOR 2018-2023

ACTION ITEM #1: Increase number of articles or content submittals from Board members to 10 per month. (Priority 1)

Content may include:

- Original articles
- Articles to republish from association newsletters
- Letters to the Editor
- Interviews
- Featured Planners – academic, citizen, non-profits, etc.
- Local planning news
- Previously published news articles
- Presidents/Board Member columns

ACTION ITEM #2: Fill vacant board positions (priority 2)

- Focus on recruitment of planners representative of western communities
- Strengthen the connections with state chapter Boards
- Plan for succession of existing board members

ACTION ITEM #3: Create new marketing materials (Priority 3)

- Brochure
- Annual retreat
- Promo materials

ACTION ITEM #4: Establish annual fundraising drive (priority 4)

- Create and distribute new sponsorship flyer
- Options for website, e-news campaigns,
- Establish time of year and format of a fund drive

ACTION ITEM #5: Increase number of email subscribers to 4,000 by end of 2018. (Priority 5)

- Obtain email lists from Board members (chapters, states, tribes, etc.)
- Obtain email list for conference attendees
- Purchase email lists
- Share emails with colleagues and invite them to join
- Increase utilization of social media, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn