

## On the AAS: A Resource for the 2020 Decadal Survey

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### *Introduction*

Past Decadal Surveys have included recommendations for the American Astronomical Society. We believe it is essential to provide the participants in the Decadal Survey and the entire astronomical community a clear understanding of what the Society is, how it operates, what programs and projects it currently implements, and what are its financial and other resources. Initiating new activities or programs requires the Board of Trustees to identify new resources or to stop or reduce current activities or programs.

Because the field of astronomy and astrophysics is smaller than other disciplines such as engineering, chemistry, or physics, the AAS is also smaller and less resourced than other professional organizations such as IEEE, ACS, and APS. Further, the Society currently has a wide range of projects and programs initiated over time by its Board of Trustees to further its mission to enhance and share humanity's scientific understanding of the universe. At least some of these projects and programs will not be known to everyone in the community. Additionally, much of the work necessary to produce high-quality, peer-reviewed journals, and engaging, valuable scientific conferences is unknown to the beneficiaries of these key services that the AAS provides. Therefore, this document, written with substantial input from the entire management team of the AAS will provide a detailed, in-depth review of the Society as it exists today, in 2019.

The Society stands ready to help the Decadal Survey process, most directly by publishing all submitted whitepapers in the Bulletin of the AAS, but also in many other ways from facilitating communication to providing time and space at our conferences to gather input and, ultimately, sharing the recommendations of the many hundreds—if not thousands—of astronomers who will participate in the process with the broader astronomical community. Having a complete understanding of the Society itself will therefore be useful to all participants in the Decadal Survey process and we are happy to provide it here.

### *A Brief History*

The American Astronomical Society was founded in 1899 as the Astronomical and Astrophysical Society of America. From humble beginnings of just over 200 members, the Society has steadily grown over time and now has nearly 7,700 members, mainly based in North America, but with 12% members from around the world. For most of its history, the AAS was operated through the dedicated service of volunteers, who not only provided governance for the organization, but also carried out most of the work. That same spirit of volunteerism exists today and allows the Society to accomplish much more than it could otherwise.

The Society did not establish the scholarly journals it currently owns and publishes (except for the Bulletin of the AAS). Instead, both the Astronomical Journal (AJ) and the Astrophysical Journal (ApJ) family of journals were given to the Society, the AJ in 1941 and the ApJ family in 1972. The Society has responsibly managed the journals over time, bringing them online relatively early in the development of the Internet, while operating them with a focus on authors and ensuring a supportive peer-review process.

Conferences have always been an important part of the Society's activities. The Society meets formally twice per year and supports its various Divisions with their meetings, whether held separately from or with the Society meetings and organizes a series of topical conferences in response to proposals from the community (AAS-TCS). Our meetings are complex and explained in detail below.

### *Governance*

The Society is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation and is governed by an elected Board of Trustees. In 2020 there will be 11 Trustees in total, including the seven (7) Officers. The Officers of the Society include a president (2-year term), a president-elect or past president, three vice-presidents (3-year terms), and a Treasurer and Secretary (both 3-year terms). The Board of Trustees are the fiduciaries of the corporation and are responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the Society, its resources, its business operations, its programs, and retaining its Executive Officer.

The Bylaws of the Society were re-written in 2017, resulting in the formation of a new entity connected to governance, but without any authority to make decisions for the AAS: the Strategic Assembly, composed of the full Board of Trustees, representatives of each Division and the chairs of all standing committees. The Strategic Assembly is responsible for defining the strategic plan and associated objectives and goals for the AAS, as well as monitoring progress toward achieving the objectives and goals.

### *Operational Structure*

The Board of Trustees employs the Executive Officer, who functions as the CEO of the Society. The Executive Officer hires and oversees all other staff and contractors necessary to fulfill the goals of the Society. The Science Editors report to the Editor-in-Chief who is hired and overseen by the Board and reports to the Executive Officer for day-to-day activities. There are currently 28 staff members (excluding the 13 staff of the newly acquired Sky and Telescope magazine overseen by the Executive Officer, and 30 Lead and Science Editors overseen by the Editor-in-Chief).

The Society has six (6) Divisions. The High Energy Astrophysics Division, the Solar Physics Division, Division on Dynamical Astronomy, and the Division for Planetary Sciences were approved by the AAS Council in 1968. The Historical Astronomy Division was created in 1980 and the Laboratory Astrophysics Division was formed in 2012. The Divisions are vibrant communities of researchers focused on specialized areas of research and provide tremendous value to their members. Each Division has its own meetings, some held in conjunction with the AAS and some separately. The Society's staff provides support to the

Divisions beyond just supporting their conferences, everything from financial administration to voting and communications support. From the staff perspective, it is almost like supporting seven individual Societies, although none of the Divisions are separate legal entities and all benefit from the non-profit status, financial management, and infrastructure provided by the AAS.

The Board of Trustees establishes Committees, Task Forces and Working Groups for various purposes. A full list of these units is available in online supplementary material. These groups of volunteers functionally carry out and oversee projects and programs approved by the Board to achieve strategic goals. The only reason the Society can accomplish as much as it does is due to the dedicated volunteers who serve as members of these functional units. The Society can never generate enough financial resources to replace the significant contribution of time from its engaged volunteers with paid employees.

Proposals for new activities are proposed by Committees, Task Forces, Working Groups or Divisions and discussed and approved (or rejected) by the Board of Trustees, who must factor in the financial cost, resource cost, and impact of any proposed project.

*Financial Resources* [note: this section does not discuss the newly acquired *Sky and Telescope*]

The AAS has a complicated, interconnected business model that seeks to minimize the cost-burden on the community, while ensuring the long-term viability of the Society as an organization. Although classified as a not-for-profit, the Society can earn a surplus each year from its operations, it simply cannot distribute those proceeds to individuals like a for-profit corporation but must apply them toward its charitable purpose. The Society has four main sources of overall revenue: the Society's journals in the form of subscriptions (and similar fees) and author charges (~65%), revenue from conferences (~18%), revenue from member dues (~10%), and revenue from the AAS Job Register (~5%). In total these revenue streams just slightly exceed \$10M per year. Other sources of revenue represent less than ~3% of the total, including donations and grants. The financial challenge for the Society is that the revenue streams that do support projects and programs are not easily increased. Both conference revenues and membership dues must be affordable for attendees and members. Expanding the range of revenue streams for the Society has been an important goal in recent years (examples include the eBooks program and the acquisition of *Sky and Telescope* magazine and its associated businesses).

The Society's journals and its conferences financially support nearly all the activities of the organization and function like lines of business. Unlike many other scientific member organizations, proceeds from the journals do not directly support ongoing Society programs or activities (except the journals themselves). The Society's other expenses are covered by the other revenue streams, mainly conference revenues.

The Society holds its reserve funds in a pooled, managed investment account overseen by the Investment Committee, who guide the investment strategy through an Investment Policy document. Individual stocks are not held by the Society and investments are only made through funds and funds of funds. Although the invested funds are pooled, all monies are tracked independently. For example, funds donated to support one of the Society's prizes are tracked and only used for the purpose intended by the donor. Currently, the Society holds more than \$16 million in reserves.

#### *Membership & Membership Services*

The Society is fundamentally a membership organization and the recent reorganization of its governance included a redefinition of its membership classifications. A range of informative graphics are available as online supplementary information at <http://aas.org/decadalsupplementaryinformation/>

Full Member – any person deemed capable of preparing an acceptable scientific paper on some subject of astronomy or related branch of science.

Emeritus Member – Full Members who have retired from gainful employment and whose contiguous years of membership in the Society total at least 10 years.

Graduate Student Member – those who are either considering or pursuing an advanced degree in astronomy or a related science at the graduate school level.

Undergraduate Student Member – those with an interest in the astronomical sciences who are pursuing a degree in astronomy or a related science at the college level.

Alumni Affiliate – those who have left the astronomical sciences or related fields but would like to retain a connection to the AAS community.

Amateur Affiliate – those who advance the astronomical sciences through research but do not depend on the field of astronomy as a primary source of income or support.

Educator Affiliate – those who are professionally engaged in astronomy-related education and public outreach working at community colleges, K-12 schools, science centers and museums, planetariums, or agencies.

International Affiliate – astronomers or scientists in closely related fields who do not reside in the United States.

Division Affiliate – those scientists who only hold membership in one or more of the Society's six Divisions.

Honorary Member – those non-American astronomers of distinction nominated by at least five AAS members and elected by the Board of Trustees

Patron – any person who has rendered conspicuous service to astronomy otherwise than through scientific contributions and elected by the Board of Trustees

In addition, the AAS currently has 1,628 Society of Physics Students (SPS) Affiliates who do not pay dues. When joining the SPS, students can select complimentary memberships in up to two of the ten professional physics societies which are members of the American Institute of Physics (AIP). The AAS also has 38 Corporate Members who support the work of the Society.

#### MEMBER COUNT BY MEMBERSHIP CLASS

Full Member	4,308	Alumni Affiliate	41	Division-only Affiliate	457
Emeritus Member	755	Amateur Affiliate	132	Honorary	15
Graduate Student	1,242	Educator Affiliate	92	Patron	1
Undergraduate	508	International Affiliate	142	Total	7,693

Memberships in the AAS are managed on a calendar basis, with invoices created every September for the following year. Nearly 6,000 members are billed each cycle (members are welcome to prepay for two years if they wish; thus, the disparity in counts) and members receive two mailed invoices and several emails during the membership renewal campaign each fall. Those renewing before the New Year secure a discount on their portion of author fees for a paper published in an AAS journal in the coming year, a substantial member benefit. The renewal campaign officially ends in early March when reinstatement fees are assessed, and members are put in inactive status.

The majority of new members join each fall, with a spike in October just before the AAS winter meeting abstract and registration deadlines. Prospective members can pay for Divisional memberships and AAS journal subscriptions when they apply. Applicants are asked to read and agree with the Society's Ethics Statement, Anti-Harassment Policy for AAS and Divisional Meetings and Activities, and Privacy Policy. The AAS membership team processes applications, and the paperwork is then forwarded to the Executive Officer for final approval. Members enjoy subscriptions to the monthly Physics Today magazine and can agree to receive complimentary emailed items such as the biweekly e-bulletin, AAS Digest, the monthly AAS Job Register, which includes job advertisements in the astronomical sciences from across the globe, and timely announcements, invitations, and news of interest to those working in the field. Each year, the Society prints a wall calendar and the AAS Membership Directory for members who wish to receive them.

Members who either have at least 40 years of AAS membership or have Emeritus status (retired from gainful employments and have at least 10 years of contiguous AAS membership) are invited to join the "40+E" social group. The Society hosts a lively reception in honor of this group, in conjunction with donors and sponsors, at each winter and summer meeting.

The AAS and its Divisions have nearly fifty funds for which donations are sought. The spring fundraising campaign features funds selected for a theme (e.g., early-career, women in science); fall fundraising is incorporated into the membership renewal campaign. Smaller campaigns are arranged for Giving Tuesday and an end-of-year push to maximize tax benefits. Hand-written thank you cards are sent to donors and those with gifts of \$250 or more are invited to the 40+E reception at the next AAS meeting. All donors are recognized in the Society's Annual Report and memorial tributes are listed. Official documentation for the Internal Revenue Service is mailed to donors each January.

The AAS booth serves as a hub for career services at the winter meeting. It's the place where recruiters post job ads and reserve meeting space for formal candidate interviews. Job seekers visit the booth to sign up for one-on-one career consultations, talk with career-corridor advisors, and ask about the professional and career development workshops and sessions that are scheduled during the meeting.

The AAS Agents are a group of approx. fifty members working at colleges, universities, or agencies and acting as "precinct captains" at their organizations. Agents are tasked with recruiting new members, holding meetings to share information about the Society's mission, work, and opportunities, sharing public policy action alerts and AAS meeting deadlines, and providing ideas and suggestions for improvement back to the Society. The institutions of several Agents also follow a systematic approach to graduate student membership by providing financial support. In this approach, the Society will match the institution's 2-year dues commitment, thereby providing the graduate student with 4 years of AAS membership. For their efforts, AAS Agents receive reduced registration for one AAS meeting per year, plus an invitation to the Agents reception at the winter meeting.

### *AAS Publishing*

The AAS currently publishes a portfolio of the most-read and most-cited research journals in the field, including *The Astronomical Journal*; *The Astrophysical Journal*; *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*; and *The Astrophysical Journal Supplements*. A new avenue for brief reports, comments, and null results, *Research Notes of the AAS*, was added in 2017. *The Bulletin of the AAS* resumed publication in 2019 in an online-only format primarily as a home for important white papers in the field including those of the Astro2020 Decadal Survey.

As publishers of the field's journals of record, the AAS employs a team of 30 Lead and Science Editors who are also active topic experts (<https://journals.aas.org/topical-corridors/>) to work closely with authors and referees to get to the best possible article for publication. AAS authors also receive assistance from a statistics editor and two dedicated data editors on staff. A recent special arrangement with the Journal of Open Source Software means that AAS authors can have their code reviewed in tandem with their science results. AAS Journals now offer Living Project Articles for missions and science teams to add updates over time to their already published results. Since 2015, AAS Nova (<https://aasnova.org/>) has featured highlights of new results published in the AAS journals, with special attention to interesting results without press coverage elsewhere. The AAS Editor in Chief issues publication charge waivers to assist authors in financial hardship.

The AAS has a tradition of developing and maintaining open source research and publishing tools for the benefit of the community, including AASTeX (<https://journals.aas.org/aastex-hints>); the AAS WorldWide Telescope (<http://worldwidetelescope.org/>); and the Unified Astronomy Thesaurus (<http://astrothesaurus.org/>). In partnership with the Astropy Project, the AAS has developed a new package (<https://aas-timeseries.readthedocs.io/en/latest/index.html>) for producing interactive figures from any time series data set. An AAS Innovation Scientist has recently been engaged to ensure core activities are on the cutting edge.

Long committed to supporting community initiatives, the AAS has worked closely with the Astrophysics Data System (ADS) since its inception, as one of the original content providers and as an occasional development resource (funding an ORCID query API at ADS). AAS leads an Arthur P. Sloan Foundation grant in collaboration with ADS and Zenodo at CERN to enable robust discovery and citation of astronomical software. A STEM society group including AAS as a founding member is working to ensure the independence and sustainability of the arXiv preprint service. AAS provides support for the student-run Astrobites group communicating important science results across the discipline.

As the publisher of some of the first astronomy research journals to go online, the AAS is a founding member of many scholarly publishing initiatives such as Cross Ref, ORCID, and CHORUS, and includes a member of the Physics-Astronomy-Math (PAM) division of the Special Library Association on its Publications Committee. AAS Journals content has been generated in multiple electronic formats since 1995 to enable ongoing and future access and is mirrored in dark archives at Portico and CLOCKSS. Legacy AAS journals content has never been behind a paywall; articles published under a Gold Open Access arrangement are immediately accessible to everyone upon publication. All other articles are published as Green Open Access and are available to non-subscribers after 12 months.

While overseeing the submission and peer review process in house, the AAS has partnered with the Publishing arm of the Institute of Physics (UK) for design and marketing and speedy, professional production and content delivery since 2008. Joint developments include the Astronomy Image Explorer

(<http://www.astroexplorer.org/>) and the AAS-Institute of Physics Publishing eBooks Series which publishes shorter, more interactive titles in astronomy and astrophysics as an alternative to more traditional textbooks and monographs in the field. A very active editorial board comprised of volunteer AAS members oversees this series.

### *Scientific Conferences*

Scientific conferences play an important role in the advancement of science and fostering communities of scientists. The AAS has organized conferences since its very founding and they play an important part of the Society's overall mission and, increasingly, its financial operation.

The two annual meetings of the Society and its largest Division meetings represent significant logistical challenges. One driver for the logistical complexity of AAS conferences is the desire to have all (or most) attendees actually "present" their research, whether in spoken or printed form (as scientific posters), or both. Audio amplification is required. Projection of presentation materials must be arranged, and ample chairs, lighting and physical comforts must be provided. Wireless and wired Internet access must be provided to attendees and exhibitors, respectively. Temporary furniture, booths and decoration must be setup, used and taken down. Security and arrangements for medical emergencies must be provided. Social events must be planned, including provision of food and beverages, which often represent the bulk of the meeting costs. Lodging must be arranged for meetings longer than a single day. Abstracts must be received and processed. Registration must be set up and managed, both before the meeting and on site. Even the simple progression of the meeting, whether singular talks by individuals, panel sessions or workshops must be scheduled and shared with the planned attendees.

The costs for organizing AAS meetings are recovered via participant registration, exhibitor fees and sponsorships. Financial planning, budgeting and collection of fees are an important part of the AAS' meeting organization. Without sound budgeting, regular assessment of costs and dynamic adjustment in the lead-up to the meeting, financial losses are nearly guaranteed. Additionally, substantial infrastructure is now in place, along with proper separation of function and accounting practices, to allow reliable financial success for all meetings. This is important, as meeting cost overruns represent funds that cannot be used to achieve other goals and are essentially wasted.

Each year the American Astronomical Society organizes a winter meeting with more than 2,500 attendees (occasionally greater than 3,500 attendees), a summer meeting of roughly 700 attendees, between one and four Division meetings from 100 to over 800 people each and a wide range of smaller meetings, mainly necessary for Society governance. In addition, the Society has established an AAS topical conference program beginning in summer 2013 (for details, please see [www.aas.org/meetings/aastcs](http://www.aas.org/meetings/aastcs) ).

Because of all this meeting activity, the Society has invested carefully in its meeting planning and execution systems. The AAS maintains a meeting services group, consisting currently of a Director, a Senior Meetings Manager, a Science Program Administrator, a Meetings Coordinator, a Meeting Services Specialist and a Director of Exhibits & Sponsorship. The Executive Officer, Deputy Executive Officer, the Chief Financial and Operating Officer and other finance and operations staff provide substantial additional planning and support functions, while many other AAS staff members support different aspects of the conferences. At any given time, our staff could be handling the details of nine or ten meetings at the same time. It is a tremendous challenge and one our staff is expert at handling.

Because substantial savings can be attained and preferred dates retained by planning well in advance, the AAS regularly identifies meeting locations many years ahead of time. The process of site selection is complex. No single criteria or formula can be used to select a given location, but many aspects must be favorable before we present a possible location to our meetings committee and elected leaders. We select meeting locations primarily based on geographic location; whether they are close to a large population of astronomers or not, with many astronomers close by being preferred. Low priced, adequate and easy connection to an airport is also nearly always a requirement. Also important is whether they present attractive pricing (including a minimum of 30 to 40% of rooms offered at a government per diem rate) for lodging and for the meeting location itself. Sometimes hotels provide free meeting space if a certain room block is filled or food and beverage purchases made. Sometimes local Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) provide subsidy to organizers to cover expenses if a certain number of attendees will be staying at local hotels. The variety of possibilities is nearly boundless. A significant challenge we face is keeping costs as low as possible. Not all researchers have significant research support, but it is a challenge to organize a modern scientific conference while keeping costs extremely low.

### *Scientific Content*

AAS conferences are structurally and thematically complex. The AAS Vice Presidents are responsible for organizing the scientific content of the meetings, with the assistance of staff and volunteers. There are some differences between our winter and summer meetings, and these are detailed below within this list of meeting content and explanatory description.

Every member of the Society is entitled to make a contributed presentation at each AAS meeting, whether orally or via a poster. These make up the bulk of the presentations at the meeting. Contributions are either presented orally (5 minutes for oral talks, 15 minutes for dissertation talks) or in the form of a poster. New modes of presentation are being explored. Submission deadlines for contributed presentations must necessarily be two or more months in advance of the meeting as the contributed abstracts for oral and poster presentations are sorted by member-volunteers and the resultant sessions are organized into a logical structure by the VPs. During AAS Winter Meetings, posters are displayed for one day, so a new set of posters is displayed each day of the meeting. During Summer Meetings posters are displayed for two or more days, depending on how many posters we have received for the meeting in question and space constraints.

Invited Speakers are chosen by the Society's three Vice-Presidents. They select individuals who are typically good communicators or who they believe will add unique value to the meeting, such as a policy maker or scientist from another discipline. As there are only a limited number of Invited Speaker Sessions at each general AAS meeting, there is a degree of prestige to the invitation, and individuals are typically invited to speak no more frequently than once per decade.

The Society awards prizes for meritorious work in our discipline and some of these prizes include an opportunity to address a general meeting of the Society.

Special Sessions are scheduled in response to proposals from AAS members and are held at both winter and summer meetings of the Society. Special Sessions have a length of 90 minutes and are scheduled in parallel with other special sessions and contributed oral sessions.

"Meeting-in-a-Meeting", or MiM, sessions are meant to fill a gap in demand between a 90-minute Special Session and a full-week specialized conference. The goal of the MiM program is to provide (at the AAS



Summer meeting), a longer format session available to attendees. MiM sessions are scheduled in response to proposals from AAS members. They are scheduled in parallel with other special and contributed sessions.

Town Hall sessions grew out of a request from the major US funding agencies for astronomy to provide a question and answer session for the community they serve. Due to demand, they have been broadened and now include sessions from high-profile missions or facilities; AAS or non-AAS Committees, or others who want a short, open session centered around dialog between the session proposers and the community of astronomers represented at the meeting. They are scheduled in response to proposals submitted by AAS members and approved by the Committee on Meetings. They are held at both winter and summer meetings of the Society.

Workshops are scheduled in response to proposals from AAS members and are highly flexible in content and timing. They typically only take place on the weekend prior to the first full day of the meeting. Workshops can be one or two days in length. Registration fees may be charged and are collected by the AAS to cover expenses required, such as food and beverage, audiovisual expenses and so on. Any proceeds from such workshops are retained by the Society and directed toward supporting activities at AAS meetings such as the undergraduate student reception. Workshops may be full- or half-day or held all day long on both days, and any combination thereof. Very, very occasionally, workshops are held during the meeting itself, either in the evening or on the days following a meeting.

Splinter meetings are defined to provide a venue for meetings to be held at AAS conferences, which are not scientific sessions. Examples would include planning meetings for scientific missions or facilities, research team get-togethers, meetings of an administrative nature and so on. Splinter meetings can be scheduled before, during or after AAS conference days. Any AAS member can request a Splinter meeting however; participants must be registered for the meeting for at least the day of the Splinter meeting itself. Both public and private splinter meetings can be proposed, with different rules for each. Costs associated with catering and equipment rental are the responsibility of the splinter meeting organizer.

### *Press Functions*

As many interesting scientific discoveries are presented at AAS meetings, many press-related activities and functions are scheduled at the conferences. First and foremost, a suite of press conferences takes place, usually three per day for the core part of the meeting. The Society's Press Officer selects topics for these press conferences, who reviews all meeting abstracts seeking results of interest to the general public (e.g. black hole research, supernovae results, dark energy, etc.) The AAS started recording these events in 2010 and they are available online to view ([http://aas.org/press/archived\\_press\\_conferences](http://aas.org/press/archived_press_conferences)). Members of the press who pre-register with the Press Officer, may view the Press Conferences in real-time via the Internet. The AAS Press Officer also contacts authors who have submitted interesting scientific results, but who were not selected for a press conference, and encourages them to issue a press release at the meeting. These, along with other press releases submitted to the Society, are distributed to the media during the meeting. The Society also operates a press room, which provides services to attending media representatives including Internet access, fax and photocopy machines, desk space, telephone service and refreshments.

### *Exhibit Hall*

A key part of the AAS meetings is the exhibition hall, which serves as a trade show and the location for the display of contributed posters. The AAS contracts with a meetings and exhibitions contractor to build the

exhibit booths, to provide electricity and Internet services, to rent furniture for the booths and so on. Hosting an exhibit hall provides an important venue for communication between organizations and people, while making the meeting about more than just oral presentations. The exhibition floor space also provides room for the display of the contributed posters, which are changed daily at winter meetings and sometimes less frequently at summer meetings.

The Society also endorses AAS Regional Conferences [ <https://aas.org/meetings/regional-meetings> ] and organizes public outreach events at the AAS annual conferences in the form of school children visiting the conference on a day with a special program organized by exhibitors (as an opt-in opportunity). Star parties, public lectures and movie showings are occasionally arranged as well.

### *Advocacy and Public Policy*

The Society's public policy program is led by a relatively small office of professional staff—currently a director and the John N. Bahcall Public Policy Fellow—in consultation with the Society's President and other elected leaders, the Committee on Astronomy and Public Policy, and the Executive Officer. The purpose of the office is to advance the Society's public policy goals, with a primary focus on advocating before the federal government on behalf of the discipline. A major focus of the public policy staff is to facilitate communication between federal policy makers and researchers and educators in the discipline. The communication back to the membership includes sessions at AAS conferences, colloquia at departments around the country, individual emails, a website blog, and a social media account. The staff supports and trains members and division leaders who travel to Washington, DC to communicate directly with policy makers, including individual office visits and with educational Congressional briefings on hot topics (both independently and in partnership with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory). The policy staff participate in several R&D advocacy coalitions with industry, universities, and other scientific societies. The staff also represents the Society's interests with other federal program stakeholders, including convening stakeholder meetings. The staff tracks relevant federal regulations (e.g., radio spectrum, open access, and satellite constellations) and works with Congressional staff on draft legislation. The elected leadership, in consultation with the policy staff and the Committee on Astronomy and Public Policy, issues the official public policy positions of the Society. As the key spokesperson for the Society, the President meets with and sends letters to Congress and the Administration and occasionally testifies before Congress.

### *Press & Media Services*

In addition to press services provided at AAS meetings, the Society maintains a press release distribution service, which distributes several press releases per day throughout the year. The Press Officer also refers members of the media to relevant experts for quotes or resource links for articles. Press conferences are also held at our larger Division meetings and supported by the Press Officer, who also advises Public Information Officers at observatories and other institutions.

### *Professional Development & Career Services*

The Society maintains a Job Register, which is an international resource for jobs in astronomy and related disciplines at all levels of employment. Professional Development workshops and other activities are organized by the Employment Committee with the help of AAS staff.

### *Education and Outreach*

The Society's Education Committee helps carry out projects and programs in the areas of Education and Outreach. These include the Education Mini Grant program; workshops at AAS Conferences and

Education Sessions at AAS Conferences. The Society operates the Shapley lectureship program and the Beth Brown Awards and Lectures, which support astronomers visiting institutions that have historically not had an astronomer on campus. Educators receive discounts for meeting registration and dues. The Society participates in several coalitions, provides representation to advisory bodies and programs in the area of education, for example, the Solar Eclipse Task Force that helped coordinate public outreach efforts along the 2017 solar eclipse track in the US. The Society also provides sponsorships for a wide range of meetings such as NSBP, SPS PhysCon, WIP and NSHP. The Society partners with the Astronomical Society of the Pacific on the Astronomy Ambassadors Program, a training workshop for early-career astronomers to gain public speaking and outreach skills. The Society supports astrobites (and all other associated 'bites sites) and the ComSciCon workshop program.

### *Society Infrastructure*

To run and operate the Society, substantial infrastructure both administrative and physical must be provided and maintained. The Society maintains a professional accounting system and general ledger for the Society and each Division. Accounts payable, receivable, bank account management, batch processing and so on must be operationally efficient and accurate. Through contractors, the Society prepares annual tax forms and undertakes an audit annually. The numerous contractors retained to assist the Society from legal counsel to HR consultants must all be managed, contracts maintained and so on. Monthly cash flow analysis and budget review form the foundation of our administrative process.

The Society is an employer to more than 30 people and provides payroll and benefits management. Travel reimbursements for staff and volunteers as well as fixed asset management, grant oversight and reporting and administrative management of the wide range and number of programs the Society runs add to the administrative burden of the small number of staff members devoted to this area of effort.

### *Summary*

The understandable length constraints of this submission limit our ability to provide a comprehensive view of the wide range of programs and administrative support for those programs. That said, we explained in some detail some key aspects of Society operations and hope that this information will assist the Decadal Survey participants and the community to understand that the American Astronomical Society is a complicated operation serving its members and the community as efficiently as possible.

We will make additional information, as referenced in this document and other information available online. As stated in the introduction to this paper, the Society is resource limited. New programs or efforts, no matter how small, require new resources or the redirection of existing resources through program cancellation or reduction. The Society does not have infinite resources, but it has a limitless desire to achieve our mission to enhance and share humanity's scientific understanding of the universe, a goal we know the National Academies and the participants in the Decadal Survey share.