

ASLE Strategic Vision and Plan 2027–2033

Executive Summary

This strategic plan outlines priorities for ASLE. Emergent from our planning process are several areas of work: ensuring ASLE’s financial as well as environmental sustainability; exploring new digital strategies amidst a changing media and technological landscape; continuing and extending the work of justice, equity, and inclusion, and doing so in ways that actively support our diverse membership; fostering and elevating scholarly, creative, and activist work beyond conventional academic genres; and furthering engagement not only with diverse public audiences but also with diverse regional environments, nonhuman and built.

The process to create this strategic plan for 2027–2033 began during a series of virtual meetings among ASLE leadership in spring 2026. ASLE’s leadership team comprises elected officers, the Executive Council (EC), appointed officers and liaisons, and ASLE’s sole staff member, Managing Director (MD) Amy McIntyre. The 2026 leadership meetings, led by Co-Presidents April Anson and Alexander Menrisky, focused on laying foundations for a new strategic plan.

Five strategic areas and planning groups emerged from shared ideation and collective prioritization. Working through a series of collaborative exercises, the EC identified the following strategic areas for ASLE (including *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, the organization’s journal) to develop:

- Organizational Sustainability
- Digital Strategies
- Diversity and Member Support
- Alternatives to Conventional Academic Work
- Place-Based Engagement

Planning group members drafted relevant sections of the strategic plan. Their members were:
Organizational Sustainability: Alexander Menrisky, Kathryn Dolan, Nate Otjen, Ben Stanley, and Mary Tischler

Digital Strategies: Sarah Dimick, Christina Gerhardt, Amy McIntyre, and Suparna Sinha

Diversity: Megan Kaminski, Anna Zarra Aldrich, and Suparna Sinha

Academic Alternatives: April Anson, Kelsey McFaul, and Daniel Spoth

Place-Based Engagement: Amy Hamilton, Addie Hopes, and Nicole Seymour

After its inception, ASLE grew from a membership numbering in the low hundreds to a much larger organization. However, in recent years membership has declined substantially, due in large part to broader challenges facing a variety of institutions related especially to higher education. ASLE’s membership over the course of 2026 included about 575 people—**down almost 66 percent from roughly 1700 in 2020**. With this decline in mind, it is a critical moment for ASLE to think carefully about membership and retention; organizational continuity (in terms of both finances and leadership transitions); fundraising and development (especially in an era of

increasingly scarce grants and donations); the future of the biennial conference (and off-year programming); and the varieties of support the organization does and can offer to its diverse stakeholders. **For these reasons, ASLE’s chief priority is to create a new Development Officer leadership position and to make an appointment to that role.**

1. Organizational Sustainability

ASLE recognizes our responsibility to explore, develop, and model sustainable environmental, financial, and labor practices on behalf of our members and for the benefit of other academic professional organizations. ASLE has a biennial conference model with an off-year virtual symposium, which is considered a best practice among peer organizations. As with the decision by the EC to move ASLE conferences to a LEED Platinum facility, future decisions should take into consideration environmental, financial, and labor sustainability. The in-person conference has typically produced a net positive in the budget such that the budget can be balanced over a two-year period. However, financial gains have historically occurred in large part because universities have underwritten some expenses for conferences they have hosted, or EC members have accessed funds available at their institutions to support conference events—two sources of sponsorship that are no longer guaranteed or even likely. Furthermore, 2025 conference revenue was far lower than expected. Given that memberships and conference registrations currently sustain ASLE operations (salary for MD, website, insurance, etc.), it is imperative that ASLE leadership works not only to plan fiscally responsible conferences and sustain membership at numbers adequate to fund expenses, but also to identify additional sources of revenue.

Table 1. Strategic Priority: Organizational Sustainability

Strategic Priority	Responsible Entity
Labor Sustainability: Designated functions and continuity. Complete organizational chart, with defined roles. Establish clear workflow documentation for Managing Director (MD) role. Complete calendar of two-year ASLE workflow. Ensure each new member of the leadership team receives an updated welcome packet, organizational chart, and calendar overview. Develop a list of recommended practices for “baton-passing” by EC members or outgoing committee chairs, including the possibility of a formal turnover process (like a 6-month mentorship) after the EC position changes hands, to ensure that whatever initiatives ASLE has in the works are safely passed to the next EC member.	Co-Presidents, MD

Financial Sustainability: Development. Establish a Development Officer EC position. Identify a starting slate of 2–3 target funders to support our strategic vision, to be re-evaluated and updated on a regular basis. (<i>Note:</i> Granting organizations typically require a concrete project to support—such as a conference) Draft grants, to be reviewed, edited, and approved by the EC and Officers.	Development Officer, MD
Financial Sustainability: Membership and retention. Promote lifetime memberships. Actively address lapsed memberships, either through auto-renewal (at least allow an option, or incentive, such as a discounted conference registration) and targeted communication. Explore additional meaningful ways for members to connect during non-conference years (e.g., analogs to “field trip” model).	Development Officer, MD
Financial Sustainability: Conference size and modality. Arrange for flexible conference space with a low attendance estimation (possibly based on an early registration model), allowing for greater numbers if necessary but also being willing to establish a firm cap on the number of participants. Off-year symposia should not only have a net zero cost to ASLE but also generate revenue in the form of a registration fee structure and the requirement of membership. Increases and modifications in all membership, registration, and/or affiliation fees, while retaining a tiered structure based on income, academic position, etc. Continue conversation about conference modality: alternating in-person and virtual every two years.	EC
Financial Sustainability: Sponsorship. Identify university conference hosts willing to cover a portion of the cost. Identify reliable conference sponsors (e.g., presses, other organizations, environmental humanities programs, even certain brands, etc.). EC members at large public R1s and endowed private institutions should work together to pool small funding opportunities from their institutions.	Development Officer, MD, EC

Promote endowed conference keynotes (currently only 1 of 4—soon to be 3—is endowed), especially among legacy members, environmental humanities programs, and presses. Arrange for bequests in trust with legacy members approaching retirement.	
Environmental Sustainability: Conference site selection. Future biennial conferences should be hosted ideally at LEED Platinum facilities in locations readily accessible by international travel and, domestically, by rail.	EC, Sustainability Officer
Environmental Sustainability: Reducing conference footprint. Encourage shared transportation when possible. Proactively promote carpooling, shuttling, and public transportation by creating a resource for members to offer or find rides. Explore incentives for non-air travel. Continue offering innovative ways to allow members to participate in the conference remotely, both as presenters and as audience. Continue making “big-name” panels and keynote speeches web-accessible and/or later available online. Continue offering virtual-only conference activities and explore alternative programming (e.g., immediate post-conference, off-year virtual conference, etc.).	Sustainability Officer, Public Engagement Officer, DS Coordinator
Environmental Sustainability: On-site conference impacts. Reduce or eliminate single-use plastic. Continue offering vegetarian and vegan menus. Request conference services provide composting for compostable waste. Explore possibilities for moving hard-copy conference materials (e.g., programs) online.	Sustainability Officer
Environmental Sustainability: Conference field trips and service activities. Continue the tradition of a variety of field trips, ideally within walking distance or using group transportation and inclusive of options for those with mobility requirements. Strive to arrange at least half of field trips in conjunction with local communities, such as Indigenous nations, and/or activist groups that would benefit from specific work/service activities during the biennial conference.	Conference Chair, Public Engagement Officer

Environmental Sustainability: Pre-conference preparation. Post videos from veteran members explaining not just what aspects of the conference they are looking forward to but also how newcomers might sustainably prepare. Create a digital “conference locale” resource, either a virtual guide or even a video from the convention center, host city, or a regional ASLE member, which highlights sustainable resources in transportation, independent and local eateries vs. chains, and recreation in the conference region.	Conference Chair, DS Coordinator
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2. Digital Strategies

ASLE is committed to being informed, careful, and deliberate about our digital strategy. While communicating with each other and broadcasting organizational news remains vital, ASLE advocates for a strong stance against the use of artificial intelligence in our work, publications, and professional life, given the devastating environmental impact of artificial intelligence. In the coming years, ASLE will strive to standardize its communications to members, at once uplifting new work and making more accessible its substantial existing archive.

Table 2. Strategic Priority: Digital Strategies

Strategic Priority	Responsible Entity
Web development. Pending available funding, a graduate student member of ASLE should be hired to maintain the website (perhaps through the form of a recurring fellowship). This new role would alleviate part of the MD’s responsibilities while also providing professional development for a graduate student. In the short term, the website (including existing resource databases) should be simplified and made easier to navigate, for purposes of both member accessibility and availability of existing information and resources.	When financially feasible a graduate fellow
Social media presence. Update (and in some cases retire) existing and establish new social media accounts. Establish workflow for updating social media accounts, including clarifying responsibilities and standardizing schedules to align	MD, when financially feasible a graduate fellow

with quarterly newsletters and other announcements, but potentially expanding beyond them (e.g., to promote more member work than what is—or perhaps should be—featured on the website, contributing to site simplification).	
Newsletter. Newsletters announcing upcoming events, sharing existing resources, and promoting new member work in the field should be published on a quarterly basis (intervals between newsletters to help prevent reader fatigue). Not all members receive the newsletter in their inboxes. The cause of this technological glitch should be actively identified and corrected.	MD
Spotlight Features. Increase but shorten and migrate majority of spotlight features exclusively to social media rather than the website. In addition to open calls for spotlight features, targeted calls might relate to the conference theme, an especially timely event, or an emergent issue relevant to the organization.	Public Engagement Officer
AI policies at <i>ISLE</i>. The rate of submissions to <i>ISLE</i> has dramatically increased, especially since 2024. This increase might be due to <i>ISLE</i>'s quick review/publication timelines. However, it might also reflect the recent saturation of AI. The journal has received submissions that incorporate AI-generated prose, despite the fact that authors must indicate that they have <i>not</i> used AI <i>at all</i> when they submit a manuscript. In the interest of transparency, we recommend against maintaining a list of barred authors based on suspected AI usage. ASLE and <i>ISLE</i> will explore alternatives for the detection of AI usage and protection of <i>ISLE</i>'s integrity (such as, for example, a small committee of experts able to vet submissions for AI usage).	<i>ISLE</i> Editor-in-Chief

3. Diversity and Member Support

ASLE aims to be welcoming, structurally equitable, and actively sustained by its members at every career stage. Fostering diversity and belonging requires more than aspirational language. It requires programming and structures that equitably distribute labor and leadership, create meaningful community, and ensure that graduate students, early-career scholars, first-generation

academics, contingent faculty, and international members are empowered to shape the organization. Additionally, ASLE's volunteer structure necessitates that the organization distribute responsibility equitably across its leadership structure, as well as cultivate agency and foster community among members—particularly graduate students and early-career scholars—who most need and benefit from community and professional development support.

Table 3. Strategic Priority: Diversity and Member Support

Strategic Priority	Responsible Entities
Member support. Establish an opt-in ASLE network to connect members through areas of expertise (e.g., experts in Indigenous studies, environmental justice, ecomedia, climate change communication, food, vegan studies), provide support, and opportunities for collaboration. Strengthen inclusion of international members and ASLE global affiliates, including by creating explicit pathways for international scholars to participate in programming and leadership. Ensure virtual programming is designed with time-zone accessibility in mind.	MD, Contingent/Independent Advocacy Seat, International Liaison
Affinity groups and the Diversity Caucus. Strengthen existing affinity communities and identify constituencies that may currently be underserved or lack dedicated spaces within the organization. Incorporate affinity-based topics and develop affinity-based community engagement in both conference and non-conference programming. The Diversity Caucus will facilitate central communication across affinity communities while allowing each to maintain its own priorities and activities.	Diversity Officer, Diversity Caucus, MD, Contingent/Independent Advocacy Seat, International Liaison
Mentorship program. Current mentorship programming has placed unsustainable demands on co-coordinators and produced inconsistent outcomes. ASLE will explore new models for mentorship programming, such as transitioning to a single coordinator to facilitate mentorship matching during a conference cycle and to facilitate graduate-student and early-career-scholar-led virtual programming between conference cycles.	Mentorship Program Co- Coordinators with Conference Committee, Graduate Student Representatives

Establish networking event(s) at each biennial conference to facilitate community among graduate students, early-career scholars, and senior faculty. Continue offering optional mentoring coffee conversations throughout the conference. Off-conference cycle programming might include roundtables on pedagogy, research, the job market and related genres, and other professional development, perhaps with established scholar-teacher respondents.	
Organizational communications. Maintain and expand communication channels for underrepresented member groups. Build on existing Diversity Caucus listservs and establish proactive communication to contingent and early-career members regarding programming, grants, and organizational updates.	Diversity Officer, Diversity Caucus

4. Alternatives to Conventional Academic Work

ASLE strives to be a research community recognized for leadership on environmental issues in the humanities and beyond, public as well as academic. ASLE will foster diverse collaborations between both our members and the general public by strengthening public writing, research, and the arts, highlighting work dedicated to advocacy, activism, and pedagogy. When organizing conference panels and plenaries, as well as other non-conference programming, ASLE will feature community-engaged work and service projects, as well as engage with activist organizations and leaders and other grassroots community groups, non-profits, agencies, and NGOs. Additionally, ASLE will foster engagement with science writing and public writing to more explicitly impact public discourse, and will actively promote the ongoing community-engaged work of its members through its website, conference, and media and publicity resources.

Table 4. Strategic Priority: Alternatives to Conventional Academic Work

Strategic Priority	Responsible Entity
Fostering opportunities and training for public-facing work. Provide opportunities for members to learn about and create outward-facing writing and other media forms (e.g. films, podcasts, games). Develop new programming and digital spaces as well as use	Public Engagement Officer, Digital Strategies Coordinator

existing tools (the website and social media) to help ASLE members and groups make their work more visible. Cultivate relationships with EH series editors and create opportunities for ASLE members to interact with them. Research and identify grants for public science, environmental writing, and other EH work.	
Increasing public humanities engagements between members and grassroots community groups, non-profits, agencies, NGOs, and funders. Organize workshops and meetings to connect activists, members of the public, and scholars to deepen mutual support for our work. Build a longer arc of engagement with grassroots and activist groups, from conference planning to continued engagement. Include 1–2 publicly engaged or activist plenary speakers at every conference. Prioritize advocacy and activist panels for remote and in-person conferences and other programming.	Public Engagement Officer, Digital Strategies Coordinator, Conference Chair
Elevating and promoting existing member work. Promote academic programs working with regional publics, such as the University of Idaho’s Confluence Lab and LENS. Publicize public-facing panels at the conference, off-year symposia, and other events. Provide guidelines for publicizing work by updating the press kit on the website. Provide guidelines on how to pitch and develop templates for different types of series or posts (e.g., interviews, book reviews). Pitch themed series to national publications.	Public Engagement Officer, Digital Strategies Coordinator
Fostering the continued development of nontraditional and public-facing environmental pedagogies. Prioritize pedagogy-focused panels for all conferences, remote, in-person, and other programming. Feature public pedagogies in the teaching resources database on the ASLE website (and tag resources with keywords for searchability). Develop new programming and adapt existing teaching strategies for a K-12 audience.	Diversity Officer

Develop resources to equip educators to respond to rapidly shifting educational contexts and demographics, such as multilingual students and experienced learners.	
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5. Place-Based Engagement

ASLE will continue to work to foster place-based engagement, both at the conference location and within defined regions throughout the year. Place-based engagement opportunities include partnering with local organizations and activists to intentionally support local social and environmental initiatives as well as developing Regional Collaboratories that foster connected conversations and strengthen relations of reciprocity among academics, grassroots networks, and local and regional nonprofits to build more just environmental futures. Along with defining priorities and action items, this plan calls for the creation of several new positions. First, it recommends the appointment of a K-12 Liaison to serve on the ASLE Executive Committee. Second, it recommends the naming of several Regional Liaison positions that correspond to the regions defined by the EC. The Regional Liaisons will work with the Regional Collaboratories Chair to create regional networks, projects, and events.

Table 5. Strategic Priority: Place-Based Engagement

Strategic Priority	Responsible Entity
Conference: Local organizations. In advance of the conference, reach out to local Indigenous, environmental, and social justice organizations to develop meaningful workshops, service projects, and field trips. In conference CFP, encourage presentations and panels on the local area/issues, ideally including local voices. Maintain existing and create new opportunities for conference attendees to donate to support local organizations.	Co-Presidents, Conference Committee, Conference Chair(s)
Conference: Local scholars, artists, activists. In the conference CFP, encourage scholars and students at the host site to present and encourage workshops and panels that include participation by local activists and artists. Encourage conference attendees to sustain connections with local organizations, artists, K-12 educators, etc., by creating and supporting post-conference publication opportunities (e.g., a post-	Conference Committee, Public Engagement Officer

conference mini-magazine featuring such work, edited by the public engagement officer and small editorial team).	
Conference: K-12 participation. In advance of the conference, invite K-12 educators to participate with free or reduced-cost registration opportunities and partner with them to develop seminars, workshops, and opportunities for student participation (e.g., poster sessions, pedagogical and/or hands-on workshops, keynote speakers that target K-12 topics and concerns, etc.). Consider creating a new K-12 Liaison position (even if only temporary for the conference) to facilitate this work.	Conference Committee, K-12 Liaison
Regional Collaboratories: Pilot program. Develop a steering committee to determine the scope and goal of a pilot program, issue a call for members to identify a potential region, and pursue grants to support seed funding.	Regional Collaboratories Chair, Development Officer, Executive Council
Regional Collaboratories: Networks. Identify and define regions for Regional Collaboratories. Create new Regional Liaison roles to correspond with defined regions and work with the Regional Collaboratories Chair to create regional networks, projects, and events, and invite members to volunteer as liaisons. Support Regional Liaisons in identifying potential ASLE members within identified regions.	Regional Collaboratories Chair, Executive Council, Regional Liaisons
Regional Collaboratories: Projects. Create in-person and virtual workshops for regional members to brainstorm and collaborate on projects. Identify opportunities for sharing collaborative projects (e.g., conference panels/seminars/workshops, ASLE Spotlight series, etc.).	Regional Collaboratories Chair, Regional Liaisons, Executive Council
Regional Collaboratories: Events. Provide seed money and support for short, targeted regional meetings (e.g., symposia, workshops, retreats, service projects, salons, etc.)	Regional Collaboratories Chair, Regional Liaisons, Development Officer, Executive Council

Regional Collaboratories: Outreach. Foster real and lasting relationships with local and regional organizations. Seek out local and regional service project opportunities. Pursue partnerships with local and regional K-12 educators.	Regional Collaboratories Chair, Regional Liaisons,
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