

FULL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

Friday, February 6, 2026

ACTION ITEMS:

EVERYONE: If you haven't already responded to the survey distributed by Shoshana concerning a discount for the Plant Biology 2026 meeting, **please do so as soon as possible.**

EVERYONE: Consider taking part in the Bud'dy Program at the Plant Biology meeting.

JANEEN – Will contribute something on behalf of the Ambassador's to the next newsletter.

SHOSHANA – Will send questionnaire to Janeen who has agreed to be highlighted in the Member Spotlight section of the next newsletter.

SHOSHANA – Will investigate why the article from Aruna's student from Nigeria was not included in the most recent newsletter issue

SHOSHANA – Will send sample section report to appropriate members as an example for newsletter contributions and will remind sections of the need to report.

TAYLOR – Will put together a report from ECPS on the 3-minute thesis and ECPS activities for a future newsletter.

SHOSHANA – Will ask other Sections to write reports for the newsletter.

SHOSHANA – Will set up a meeting with Taylor, Janeen and Aruna to discuss the Plant Biology 2026 Membership Committee proposed Workshop.

ASHA – Will conduct interviews with new and long-term members (including Amin and Miguel) about their experiences as an ASPB member.

SHOSHANA – Will send to MemComm, the slate of new Ambassadors to approve and, later, the Ambassador of the Year to vote on.

SHOSHANA – Will review and potentially modify the Hardship Application form to improve clarity and understanding for applicants.

SHOSHANA – Will provide any available data on the rate of engagement of hardship member recipients.

SHOSHANA – Will send a reminder for the April 30th full committee meeting approximately 2 weeks before the meeting.

NOTES/SUMMARY:

ASPB Newsletters

The following due dates for ASPB News issues was shared:

- Issue 1: Jan. 26, 2026 -**DELAYED**

- *Anticipated release date: Feb. 11, 2026*
- Issue 2: April 6, 2026
- *Anticipated release date: April 22, 2026*
- Issue 3: Aug. 3, 2026
- *Anticipated release date: Aug. 19, 2026*
- Issue 4: Nov. 2, 2026
- *Anticipated release date: Nov. 18, 2026*

It was decided that, for the upcoming issue, content that the Membership Committee will provide is as follows:

(1) Member highlights –Janeen Braynen has agreed to be highlighted in the next issue.

(2) Section highlight – Azam has written information from the PUI section which can go in the next issue.

Additionally, ECPS will prepare information on the 3-minute thesis and their plans for this year.

(3) Ambassador Reports – Janeen will touch base with the Ambassadors and prepare a report with updates on their activities. {Ambassador reports will also be posted to the ASPB website.}

It was noted that we need to improve visibility of the newsletter, particularly on the new design of ASPB's website. Currently, the newsletters can be found here under "Publications": <https://aspb.org/publications/aspb-news/>. See link to the archived ones.

PB26 Workshop

Janeen and Taylor have agreed to help with the workshop for Plant Biology 2026 and Shoshana will set up a meeting to discuss who might be good facilitators, etc. If anyone else wants to join the team or if you have an idea for a facilitator, let Shoshana know.

ASPB Strategic Plan

Crispin gave an overview of the plan and its purpose:

- It is meant to be a unifying document that sets out an agreed set of objectives while providing latitude for new input.
- It is meant to help people understand the perimeters within which a committee or group is operating
- It should assist with constructing budgets. Aspects of the budgets should be tied to aspects of the strategic plan.

- When fully approved/adopted, the strategic plan will be a public facing document as well as a document that helps to drive decision making within the organization.
- In short, “ASPB’s mission is to nurture, empower, and inform the global plant biology community.”

We will be revisiting this plan in a “small scale” way each year and conducting a more comprehensive assessment every third year or so. This one is a **2026 – 2028** plan.

It was noted that there is nothing *specific* to the Sections in the strategic plan, although the goals of the Sections do in general align with those in the strategic plan. However, there could be improvement to the plan in this record.

Specifically, there was some discussion as to the need for enhancing collaboration between ASPB and each of the Sections above and beyond providing support for the Plant Biology meeting and their own section meetings.

It was suggested that each Section meet to discuss this. Two specific ideas/suggestions were

(1) the sections could host some webinars (perhaps two a year?) using ASPB’s Plantae platform.

(2) the sections collaborate with the Ambassadors in their region and do some activities with them.

Regarding webinars, it was noted that while some webinars have been offered to “members only” to increase the value proposition of membership, those webinars were poorly attended. There is also concern that putting webinars behind a paywall conflicts with ASPB’s accessibility goals.

One suggestion was that we could charge the webinar but waive the fee for Section members.

Within the Strategic Plan, we need to make it clear – in general – what the value is to being an ASPB member. This needs to be more strategically outlined and explicitly stated. Ambassadors often ask about ways to communicate this. There is currently a video here on why you should be an ASPB member -- <https://aspb.org/membership/aspb-member-resources/>

It was suggested that we prepare something that shows a breakdown of what “my membership dollars are paying for” and include things like Plant Biology, the journals, travel awards for young scientists, etc.

We need to get better at promoting the legislative affairs/advocacy work we do. It is not a *direct* benefit of membership but is a part of supporting something that is bigger than you on behalf of the collective community.

We need to emphasize the networking and leadership development opportunities that ASPB provides. We need to share about this more broadly.

What makes ASPB stand out from other societies?

Asha offered to do a piece on the subject of ASPB over the years, highlighting 3-4 long time members through young members to share why they are members of ASPB. Miguel and Amin agreed to help with this effort.

ASPB Staff have also met to discuss the Strategic Plan. They will take this outward facing plan (visionary document) and make determinations as to what is actually feasible so that the Board can decide on where to invest more and where less to match the goals of the Plan with the budget.

Launching SIGs (Special Interest Groups) could be training and education. And, perhaps this is something that could be limited to members only.

We need to be strategic in developing SIGs and choose subjects that are perennial. The plan is that as we do create SIGs they will be add-ons to membership.

The SIG provides a richer networking opportunity for networking with people interested in the same subjects.

Table for the next meeting – figure out what we do as a Membership Committee that would align with the rest of the strategic plan. What 3 specific tasks?

Hardship Application Program

Summary of 2025 program:

Total of 27 applications

16 joined for a total of a little over \$1K

Our goal for 2025 was to hit 60% acceptance rate and we hit 59.2%

Our goal to respond within two weeks to each request was basically met except for a few holiday weeks.

We didn't quite meet the goal of getting 80% of people who got a discount to renew but we did get some who did with a second discount and some who renewed on their own.

3 of the people who we gave discounts to are now Ambassadors.

A couple of people in the current set of applicants also got waivers.

Tentative Goals for 2026:

To increase the acceptance up to 70%

Reach out to the 2023-2024 people who got discount but did not renew and find out what could have made them renew.

To offer more 100% discounts.

We only used about \$1200 or less of the \$5K budget for this.

It was agreed that we lower the scoring requirements to be able to offer more 100% discounts.

We need to gather more data on whether the people who receive the discounts are, in turn, interacting with the Society during the year they are members to determine the value of this investment.

At the end of 2023, most of them were attending meetings or webinars or applying for something that requires a membership like a travel grant, Ambassador program, etc.

Need data for 2024 and 2025.

Ambassadors

Shoshana will distribute an email soon about the new Ambassadors to be selected with the goal of having the new ambassadors attend the next meeting at end of month. Shoshana will send a list of people approved to everyone on the Membership Committee to approve the slate.

Ambassador of the Year will also need to be voted on (between 3 options that have been selected by Aruna and the Ambassador leadership) by the Membership Committee.

NEXT MEETING

The next Membership Committee meeting is scheduled for April 30th at 3:00pm. Shoshana will send out a reminder two weeks before.