

Academy of Model Aeronautics Strategic Long Range Plan (SLRP) 2010—2015



Academy of Model Aeronautics

Established in 1936, the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) is the world's largest model aviation association, representing a membership of more than 142,000. The Academy is a self-supporting, non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote the development of model aviation as a recognized educational sport and recreation activity. The AMA is governed by its Executive Council. The council is a volunteer board that is elected by the AMA membership and consists of 15 members—a president, executive vice president, and one vice president representing each of the AMA's 11 districts—across the nation. Additional members of the board include an appointed chief financial officer and the president of the National Aeronautic Association.

AMA is the official national body for model aviation in the United States and sanctions more than 2,000 aviation events throughout the country each year. The organization certifies official model flying records on a national and international level through the National Aeronautic Association and Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI).

AMA is the chartering organization for more than 2,500 model airplane clubs across the country and offers its chartered clubs official event sanctioning, insurance, and assistance in getting and keeping flying sites.

AMA is the voice of its membership, providing liaison with the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, and other government agencies. AMA also works with local governments, zoning boards, and parks departments to promote the interests of local chartered clubs.

The Academy is headquartered on its 1,100-acre International Aeromodeling Center in Muncie, Indiana, that also houses the world's largest model aviation museum.

Executive Summary

Model aviation is constantly evolving. To stay relevant and vital, it is important that AMA always be aware of, and keep pace with, this evolution. This Strategic Long Range Plan (SLRP) was built as a combined effort of the AMA staff and the AMA Executive Council. Working together, we identified current trends and projected where these trends would lead aeromodeling. Based on these projections, we built an SLRP that would guide AMA over the next several years.

Our members have consistently told us that their primary concerns rest in flying site acquisition and retention and government intervention that may impact what we do as model aviation enthusiasts. Additionally, education outreach has been an important part of AMA's history. AMA's membership contains several aviation and aerospace notables who have cited model aviation as being the springboard to their careers.

Finally, we wanted to address the concern over AMA's declining membership base. In the final analysis it was felt that in addition to establishing goals and objectives in each of these specific areas, developing a strong marketing program would also provide a collateral benefit in each of the other areas of importance. Promoting model aviation as a worthwhile, recreational, and educational family activity is the foundation for building a successful approach to meeting all of the goals and objectives established in this SLRP.

This SLRP addresses the primary concerns of our members, works toward maintaining our history of education outreach, and looks to the future by creating a strong marketing effort that will build the credibility of what we do as model aviation enthusiasts. This credibility can only help improve the perception of model aviation in the eyes of everyone from our friends and neighbors in our local communities to elected officials from the local to the federal level. The result will be a stronger organization, enhancing our ability to protect and preserve model aviation going forward, providing a greater value proposition to our members, while securing AMA's future as the world's leading model aviation organization.

—Dave Mathewson, AMA President

Strategic Long Range Plan Development

Recognizing the need for long-term goals and direction to achieve these goals, the Academy’s Executive Council embarked on a planning effort in 2008. As a part of the council’s quarterly meetings, time was allocated to the development of this SLRP. Participation in the development included the Executive Council, AMA staff members, AMA committee members, and other volunteers. This plan reflects the results of those meetings, electronic communications, and many hours of discussion at all levels of the organization.

AMA Vision

We, the members of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, are the pathway to the future of modeling and are committed to making modeling the foremost sport/hobby in the world. This vision is accomplished through:

- Affiliation with its valued associates, the modeling industry and governments.
- A process of continuous improvement.
- A commitment to leadership, quality, education and scientific/technical development.
- A safe, secure, enjoyable modeling environment.

AMA Mission

The Academy of Model Aeronautics is a world-class association of modelers organized for the purpose of promotion, development, education, advancement, and safeguarding of modeling activities.

The Academy provides leadership, organization, competition, communication, protection, representation, recognition, education, and scientific/technical development to modelers.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Recognizing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Academy is key in planning for its future. Building on its strengths, recognizing and correcting the weaknesses, as well as expanding on its opportunities, will ensure an efficient use of the Academy’s resources in achieving both its vision and mission statements.

Identifying the potential threats that exist in the ever-changing world of the modeling community will aid in the Academy being prepared to be either active or reactive when necessary.

The following pages illustrate how we will capitalize on our strengths and opportunities while also addressing the weaknesses and threats.

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|---|---|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <p>“Internal attributes of organization to build on.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of 142,000 members with leadership in modeling and a reputation for safety. • AMA provides unique benefits and services to members. • Resources provided by the volunteer base and dedicated, skilled employees. | <p>“Internal attributes of organization to resolve.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership and public misconception of the AMA. • Improve communication between the Executive Council, staff, individual committees, and members. • Current Web and electronic capabilities of the AMA. |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <p>“External attributes of organization to exploit.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational opportunities for aviation, science, math, engineering, and building skills. • Improving communication through utilizing electronic technology. • Promotion and support for clubs and membership growth. | <p>“External attributes of organization to avoid.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership decline and aging membership. • FAA and government/ security regulations. • Loss of flying sites. • Competing recreational activities. |

Objectives of the 2010 Strategic Long Range Plan

Volunteer-governed organizations, such as the AMA, need a plan to guide them in focusing on long-term goals for the advancement of the organization. The very survival of any organization is dependent upon strong, focused leadership deciding the course and actions of the organization. Conveying this road map of the future to the membership, staff, and the public is the purpose of the 2010 SLRP. An essential tool in seeking support for the organization in all aspects of fundraising is being able to communicate our future directions and goals.

Key Result Areas

Five key areas of focus were identified early in the process as a result of a membership survey conducted in 2007 and the deliberations of the Executive Council. Not ranked in any order, they are:

- Education
- Marketing
- Government
- Membership
- Flying Sites

Environmental Snapshot

The economic environment facing the AMA, the nation, and the world changed dramatically during the development of the 2010 SLRP and will continue to fluctuate during the execution of this plan. Therefore this document must remain flexible to accommodate this changing environment.

General:

- The Academy has been in a declining membership trend since its all-time high of 173,000 members in 2002 to a membership of 142,000 in 2009.
- The Federal Aviation Administration's rule-making efforts regarding small unmanned aircraft systems' (sUAS) impact on the model aviation community is unknown at this time.
- Even the awareness of model aviation with the proliferation of low-cost, entry-level electric aircraft into the modeling community has not resulted in an increase in membership.
- Loss of flying sites continues to be the main concern of the membership.

Targets:

- Identifying the true target audience market has been elusive.
- Although marketing programs continue to be successful with seniors, other targeted audiences, especially the youth group, have not translated into an increase in youth membership.
- Local governments (county and city) have been receptive to flying programs on public property when presented at national and state events.
- Awareness of model aviation at full-scale air shows has increased.

Positioning:

- AMA is recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration as the lead "community-based operation" in representing the nation's modeling community.
- The AMA's exemplary safety record is recognized by all involved in aviation.
- The National Aeronautic Association and Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) recognize the AMA as the official voice of aeromodeling in the United States.

Competitors:

- The stability of the AMA during its 75-year history, its benefits and service to the membership, and the support of the numerous special interest groups has placed the organization in a unique position of having no direct competition.

Resources:

- The AMA is a financially stable organization.
- It has more than 142,000 members with 2,500 chartered clubs.
- It has an experienced governing board and support staff.
- AMA has more than 75 years of experience in modeling activities.
- It boasts the world's largest model aviation museum.
- AMA is headquartered at the 1,100-acre International Aeromodeling Center in Muncie, Indiana.

Education

Education Objective: The AMA Education Department, with the support of all of the Academy’s departments, will continue its formal education programs and develop programming to achieve comprehensive information and training programs to advance the local club efforts, individuals, and other organizations in the recruitment of new members and increasing model aviation awareness.

| Strategies | Actions |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. AMA Education Web site enhancement | Redesign Web page with downloadable, user-friendly training programs, focused on all levels of education, for local club use. Integration of interactive Web site functions to attract youth. |
| 2. Outreach program for clubs | Develop programs for clubs to reach the community at all levels: children, seniors, and adults. |
| 3. Promotion of youth competition | Development of competitions within the education/awareness aspect for increased youth involvement. |
| 4. Grant exploration and development | Allocate resources to identify revenue sources and partnerships to advance the Education Department’s efforts. |
| 5. Leadership training | Develop leadership training programs for clubs, associate vice presidents, and future leaders of the Academy. |

Marketing

Marketing Objective: Enhance our image as an organization, achieving local-to-national awareness of our hobby/sport with the objective of membership growth.

| Strategies | Actions |
|---|--|
| 1. Communication to the membership | Review and enhance both print and electronic media to the membership for more effective communications. Development of new programs to allow immediate contact with members as needed. |
| 2. Increase public exposure and awareness | Develop and fund a professional advertising campaign utilizing a multimedia approach. |
| 3. Marketing programs for AMA chartered clubs | Develop public relations packets and materials for club activities. |
| 4. Government affairs support | Development of materials for use in conveying the AMA Vision and Mission to elected officials. |
| 5. Public awareness events | Conduct various events at the International Aeromodeling Center and other locations to enhance public awareness of model aviation. |
| 6. Development of non-dues revenue sources | Philanthropic development grants. |

Government Affairs

Government Affairs Objective: To build positive relationships with all levels of government agencies from the city/county/state level to those such as the Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Communication Commission, the Department of Homeland Security, and other appropriate agencies in support of the AMA Mission.

| Strategies | Actions |
|--|---|
| 1. Issue identification | Establish monitoring programs that identify proposed government actions that would adversely affect model aviation. |
| 2. Identify regulatory agencies that affect model aviation | Establish an ongoing program to identify and update key contacts within various government agencies that affect model aviation. |
| 3. Materials development | Working with the Marketing Department, development of informative materials expanding on the safety and internal governance of model aviation by the AMA. |
| 4. Regulation burdens | Communicate to the appropriate agencies burdens placed on the modeling community by agency actions and Notices To Airmen (NOTAMs). |

Membership

Membership Objective: To increase the current AMA membership trend to one of steady growth.

| Strategies | Actions |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Membership development | Design and implement programs that encourage membership recruitment at all levels—individual, clubs, AMA districts, and retail outlets. |
| 2. Membership retention | Identify and develop value-added programs, enhancing the direct and indirect benefits of AMA membership. |

Museum

Museum Objective: The museum and library is dedicated to collecting and preserving significant pieces of aeromodeling history in order to inspire a broad and passionate understanding of the historic, scientific, technical, and artistic legacy of model aviation, creating learning opportunities that stimulate the imagination, and encourage visitors to become actively involved in the world of aeromodeling.

| Strategies | Actions |
|---|--|
| 1. On-Site Experience | Create inspiring and memorable experiences for visitors of all ages by allowing them to interact with the collection through exhibits, tours, and programming. |
| 2. Off-Site Experience | Identify and develop value-added programs, enhancing the direct and indirect benefits of AMA membership. |
| 3. Artifact, Archives, and Library Protection | Allocate resources to properly provide for the care, management, and exhibition of the collection to ensure its long-term protection. |

Flying Site Acquisition

Flying Site Acquisition Objective: To develop programs to support local clubs in identifying, securing, and retaining traditional outdoor and indoor flying sites.

| Strategies | Actions |
|---|---|
| 1. Club programs for flying site acquisition | Provide appropriate materials to support local clubs' efforts in securing flying sites. |
| 2. Provide professional expertise, guidance, and legal support | Provide a national contact (Flying Site Assistance Coordinator) for clubs and individuals to seek counsel and advice in site acquisition. Provide, when appropriate, legal support to local clubs in the efforts of site retention. |
| 3. Enhance local government awareness of model aviation. Enhance federal government acceptance of model aviation. | Continue the AMA programs to expose local government leaders to the benefits of allowing modeling on public lands and facilities. Build relationships with the Environmental Protection Agency and similar organizations that could provide access to potential flying sites. |

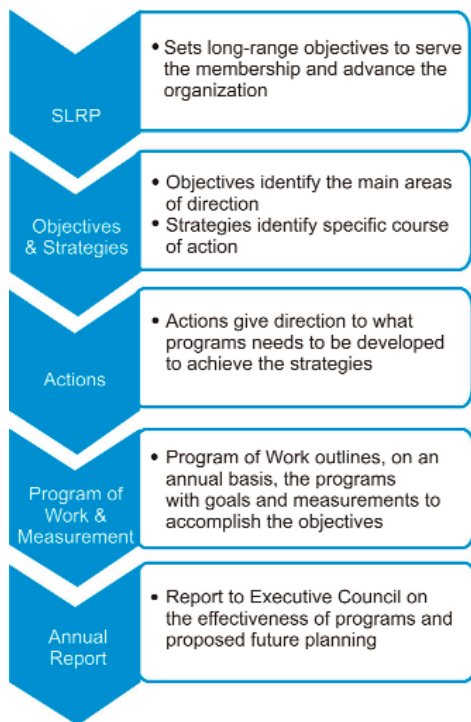
Measurement

Performance measurement supports strategic planning and goal setting. Without the ability to measure performance and progress, the process of developing strategic plans and goals is less meaningful.

The measurement of objectives such as Membership are easily tracked because of the historical data available. Objectives such as those for Education, Government Affairs, Marketing, and others are more elusive in establishing milestones and data points.

New data points will become more meaningful as a baseline is established in the AMA Annual Program of Work* (POW) and measurable goals are determined. An annual report recapping the success in programs, addressing the strategies, and actions will be produced. This SLRP is the management tool that will allow the Executive Council to reevaluate the five objectives, their strategies and actions, and adjust the next year's Program of Work.

*Program of Work: an annual business plan



Conclusion

Since its inception in 1936, the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) has been an acknowledged leader in support of model aviation activities in the United States and throughout the world. The face of aeromodeling continually changes and AMA is dedicated to identifying those changes in order to maintain the high level of support and benefits it provides to its membership.

This strategic plan is created as one of many tools AMA uses to maintain its leadership position in the aeromodeling world. This is not a sterile document, but a living, moving road map to the future that can respond to the unexpected while keeping the association on track and focused on providing a continuously high level of service to the membership.

Reaching the goals established in this plan will require a combined effort of the entire AMA family. From the general membership to the association leadership and staff, each will play an important role in the success of the plan. A coordinated effort will produce a wealth of resources and strength. AMA will achieve the goals set forth in this plan and continue its leadership role into the foreseeable future.



To contact Executive Council members, please visit the AMA Web site: www.modelaircraft.org/membership/organization/ec/contact.aspx.



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