

# **December Advisory Group**

## **Breakout Room Summary**

(AI Generated)

### **How can we identify and nurture high-potential talent early on in their careers within ASSP?**

To identify and nurture high-potential talent early in their careers within ASSP, the following strategies have been suggested:

1. Targeted Engagement & Networking:
  - Create an *Emerging Professional* section or group in chapters for members early in their careers to support one another and facilitate networking.
  - Engage young safety professionals through student chapters, safety conferences (e.g., Safety2025/2026), and chapter meetings with a focus on leadership opportunities.
  - Establish mentoring programs, especially for new members and students, involving experienced leaders who can introduce and guide them in ASSP.
  - Diversity: Engage individuals from various industries to broaden perspectives and networking opportunities.
2. Mentorship & Leadership Development:
  - Encourage mentorship at meetings with senior members acting as mentors for newcomers.
  - Identify early leaders by looking at active participation, e.g., attending events, writing for PSJ, presenting at conferences, or participating in professional groups like PS/CIG.
  - Provide leadership training through bootcamps, workshops, and targeted mentorship to nurture high-potential individuals into future leaders.
3. Early Career Involvement & Recognition:
  - Create opportunities for special projects, presentations, or writing articles to build confidence and subject matter expertise in young professionals.
  - Recognize and reward high-potential individuals with awards or special acknowledgements, such as the Outstanding Student Professional award.
  - Develop assessment tools or feedback systems for identifying members showing leadership potential, and track their engagement through surveys or personal check-ins.
4. Collaboration with Universities:
  - Strengthen ties with universities and student chapters, offering engagement through career days, recruitment events, or technical sessions.
  - Encourage faculty involvement in identifying students with leadership potential and exposing them to ASSP opportunities.
  - Create more exposure to ASSP's opportunities at the regional and national level through involvement in career days, internships, or professional development events.
5. Improved Outreach & Recruitment:
  - Increase brand awareness of ASSP at college recruitment events and on social media platforms like LinkedIn.

- Ensure that new members are aware of volunteer opportunities at the community and chapter level and offer them roles that match their interests and goals.
- Use personalized outreach (e.g., one-on-one surveys, welcome committees) to make new members feel more engaged and supported early on.

#### 6. Additional Strategies:

- "Fast-track" engagement: Encourage members to attend events early in their careers to get involved quickly.
- Utilize volunteering opportunities at networking events or PDCs to increase engagement and visibility.
- Consider non-traditional career paths to broaden the pool of potential members, such as individuals who entered the field later in their careers through alternative routes like internships or apprenticeships.

These strategies, when combined, aim to build a robust pipeline for leadership within ASSP by identifying and nurturing talent at an early stage.

### **What barriers existed for you as an early career professional trying to engage in ASSP? What barriers do you still think may exist today?**

Barriers faced by early-career professionals trying to engage in the ASSP and those that may still exist today include:

#### 1. Time and Logistics:

- **Work Commitments:** Many early-career professionals struggle to balance work schedules with meeting times, especially when meetings conflict with project deadlines or travel requirements (e.g., California's geographic challenges).
- **Time Commitment:** Concerns over time away from work and personal life are common, particularly for those new in their careers who may feel overwhelmed.
- **Meeting Location and Access:** Distance, geography, and logistical issues (e.g., unclear or outdated event details on websites, lack of information about meeting locations) can make attendance difficult, particularly for members in remote areas.

#### 2. Lack of Awareness and Communication:

- **Unawareness of ASSP Opportunities:** Many early-career professionals are unaware of the resources, events, and leadership opportunities within ASSP or don't know how to get involved.
- **Visibility and Branding:** There is a lack of brand awareness about ASSP compared to other organizations like NSC, and professionals often don't know what ASSP offers or how to tap into its full potential.
- **Communication Barriers:** Lack of communication from ASSP regarding events and opportunities, and difficulty navigating the website for information, were identified as ongoing issues.

#### 3. Imposter Syndrome and Confidence:

- **Feeling Undervalued or Inexperienced:** Many early-career professionals report feeling like they don't have enough experience or knowledge to contribute, leading to feelings of imposter syndrome. There is often a fear that the group doesn't need their contributions.

- Cliques and Exclusivity: Some feel that established groups within ASSP are cliquish, making it difficult for newcomers to integrate. There is often little effort made by leadership to encourage new members to connect with the broader group.

#### 4. Support from Employers:

- Lack of Employer Support: Gaining approval from employers to attend events or volunteer with ASSP can be challenging, as some employers may not see the immediate value of professional development for their employees.
- Difficulty in Demonstrating Value: Even if professionals recognize the value of ASSP, convincing employers to support their participation (e.g., through time off or funding) can be a barrier.

#### 5. Internal Barriers:

- Introversion and Social Engagement: Introverted professionals may struggle to initiate interactions or feel reluctant to attend events without personal outreach or encouragement.
- Leadership Dynamics: Some feel that leadership transitions and the term limits within chapters may make it harder for new members to get involved in leadership roles or access ongoing mentorship.
- Gender, Age, and Experience: Issues like feeling unwelcome based on gender, age, or background (e.g., coming from an unrelated field) contribute to imposter syndrome and a lack of confidence in early-career professionals.

#### 6. Systemic Barriers:

- Geographic Dispersal: ASSP's large geographical spread can make it difficult to network and engage for members in isolated locations.
- Chapter-Specific Barriers: Issues like inconsistent chapter engagement, outdated websites, or lack of clear leadership can hinder newcomers from easily participating.

In summary, while some barriers (like geographic and logistical issues) have been addressed with virtual options, many still exist, especially around time commitments, communication, lack of employer support, and creating inclusive, welcoming environments for new professionals.

### **Are there specific mentorship or coaching practices you would recommend to support leader development? What development/training opportunities were most impactful to you? What do you wish you had?**

To support leadership development within ASSP, several mentorship and coaching practices, as well as training opportunities, have been recommended:

#### Mentorship Practices:

##### 1. Formal Mentorship Programs:

- Establish *role-specific mentorship tracks*, where experienced leaders mentor those aspiring to similar positions. This would create a pipeline for future leaders.
- Leadership-specific mentoring should be prioritized, helping emerging leaders learn leadership skills through hands-on guidance.
- Shadowing Programs: Allowing new leaders to shadow current leadership in their roles provides valuable insights into the responsibilities and challenges of leadership positions.
- "Come with Us" Approach: Encouraging mentors to actively bring mentees along to meetings and events fosters deeper engagement and relationship-building.

- Mentorship for Safety Professionals: Special emphasis on mentoring safety professionals in the early stages of their careers, ensuring they receive guidance and recognition.
2. Practical Engagement and Experience:
    - Real Experience Sharing: Mentors should share real-life scenarios and experiences to give mentees practical insights into leadership challenges.
    - Field Trips and Events: Providing opportunities for mentees to attend conferences, volunteer at PDCs, or participate in local chapter roles allows for hands-on learning and networking.
  3. 360-Degree Feedback:
    - Incorporating honest 360-degree feedback (preferably face-to-face) for emerging leaders, which can help identify areas of improvement and guide personal development.
  4. Building a Welcoming Environment:
    - Creating a welcoming environment for new members and leaders is crucial. Leadership should be proactive in reaching out to new members and integrating them into the fold, making sure they don't feel excluded or overlooked.

#### Training and Development Opportunities:

1. Leadership Development Conferences:
  - Conferences such as the Future Safety Leaders conference have been highlighted as impactful, offering workshops like mock interviews and resume reviews, which are valuable for emerging professionals.
  - Region-specific leadership development conferences and training sessions should be expanded to provide more accessible opportunities for professional growth, particularly for students and early-career professionals.
2. Formal Leadership Training:
  - Leadership development programs with a structured curriculum (e.g., 8-12 month programs with virtual and in-person components) that focus on leadership skills, decision-making, and professional growth were found to be impactful.
3. Training on Navigating Challenges:
  - Training on difficult conversations and conflict resolution is important for leaders, especially in today's diverse work environments. Leaders should be equipped to handle tension and manage diverse opinions within their teams.
  - Training on code-switching and engaging with various groups is necessary to navigate different leadership dynamics and improve inclusivity.
4. Micro-Volunteering and Engagement:
  - Offering micro-volunteering opportunities helps mitigate the time commitment barrier, making it easier for new members to engage in smaller, low-stakes ways before taking on larger roles.
  - Encouragement and feedback from mentors and supervisors are critical to keeping new leaders motivated and confident as they take on responsibilities.
5. Job Placement and Employer Support:
  - ASSP could offer job placement support and help connect emerging professionals with opportunities, as well as provide resources to assist employers in understanding the value of allowing employees to engage with ASSP.

In summary, mentorship, formal leadership programs, hands-on experience through shadowing and volunteering, and constructive feedback are all highly recommended for developing future leaders within ASSP. Additionally, more training on leadership challenges, inclusivity, and employer engagement would further support emerging professionals in their leadership journeys.

**What support mechanisms (e.g., leadership rotation, cross-functional assignments), training or development helped you as an emerging professional? What gaps do you see and what could help in developing a well-rounded leadership pipeline?**

Responses to the question about support mechanisms and training that helped emerging professionals, as well as the gaps and suggestions for developing a well-rounded leadership pipeline, highlighted several key themes:

Support Mechanisms and Training That Helped:

1. Company and Supervisor Support:

- The company and supervisor play a significant role in the development of emerging safety professionals. Having a supportive environment where leadership values safety efforts can make a substantial difference.

2. Leadership Rotation and Cross-Functional Assignments:

- Leadership rotation was particularly beneficial, allowing individuals to gain diverse experiences by serving in various roles. Cross-functional assignments were also seen as helpful for broadening skill sets and perspectives.

3. Mentorship:

- Being mentored by seasoned professionals and receiving guidance from senior members helped many develop leadership skills. The "leader, mentor, advisor" model was suggested, where senior leaders actively mentor and guide their successors.
- Mentorship programs should be more structured and provide clear expectations to ensure that emerging professionals receive consistent, valuable support.

4. Training and Development:

- Leadership development courses were cited as crucial for understanding strengths and weaknesses. Public speaking training, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking were identified as essential skills for emerging leaders.
- Small group training sessions helped professionals connect with others at similar levels, fostering a collaborative environment for learning.

5. Networking and Recognition:

- Networking opportunities, especially at national conferences, played a significant role in leader development. Recognizing emerging professionals and their contributions was seen as important for their growth and motivation.
- Emerging professionals should be introduced more actively to leadership roles at events and provided with opportunities to engage with seasoned leaders.

6. Supportive Development Tools:

- Roadmaps for leadership roles and clear guidance on required training and career progression were highly recommended. Understanding how to transition between different roles and what training is needed for each would help professionals navigate their leadership journeys.

- Mentorship success stories and video highlights at PDCs could inspire new members and show the real-world impact of mentorship.

#### Gaps and Suggestions for Improvement:

##### 1. Lack of Exposure to Opportunities:

- There was concern that it can be difficult for emerging professionals to find opportunities if they don't know where to look. Increased exposure to available opportunities and resources is essential to help them get involved.

##### 2. Leadership Development Needs to Be Structured:

- There is a need for a clearer, standardized leadership development pipeline that spans Chapter, Regional, and Society levels. Each level should have defined roles and a mentoring structure, with a commitment from ASSP to provide the necessary resources and support.
- Communities should have clearer guidelines for mentorship and leadership development, including qualifications, training programs, and resources for mentors.

##### 3. Micro-Volunteering Opportunities:

- To address time commitment concerns, micro-volunteering opportunities should be emphasized. These lower-stakes opportunities can help newcomers build confidence and get involved without feeling overwhelmed.

##### 4. Increased Focus on Soft Skills:

- Emerging professionals need more soft skills development, such as public speaking, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. These skills are critical for navigating leadership roles, particularly when managing diverse teams and challenging situations.

##### 5. Diversity and Inclusion:

- Addressing gender-related challenges and the perception of assertive women in leadership is crucial. Women, in particular, reported facing challenges when pushing for leadership roles or being perceived negatively when they assert themselves. Training on navigating these dynamics and supporting women in leadership could help mitigate these barriers.

##### 6. Recognition and Re-engagement:

- It's important to recognize emerging professionals and celebrate their contributions, especially those who have taken non-traditional paths or returned to the profession after stepping away for a period. Providing scholarships and recognition awards could help raise the profile of new leaders and attract more professionals to engage with ASSP.

##### 7. Integrated and Holistic Leadership Development:

- Leadership development should be integrated at all levels of ASSP, from local chapters to national levels. This would ensure a continuous pipeline of engaged and well-rounded leaders who can step into various roles at different stages of their careers.

In summary, key support mechanisms for developing leadership include mentorship, leadership rotation, and training in soft skills like emotional intelligence and public speaking. Networking opportunities and recognition are also vital for emerging leaders. However, there are gaps in exposure to opportunities, the need for a clear leadership roadmap, and micro-volunteering options to make leadership more accessible. Additionally, gender inclusivity and better integration of leadership development across all ASSP levels are needed to create a more comprehensive and supportive environment for future leaders.