Launched in April 2020, the purpose of the Governance Modernization project is to answer the question:

*What governance culture, processes, structures & governing documents will provide the best framework for successful achievement of the AAAS mission in the coming years and match the reality of the way in which the modern organization is run?*

**OVERVIEW OF CURRENT REALITY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROJECT FOCUS**

- As currently constructed, there is an inability of the large governing body to move nimbly. In short, it is so complex in design and function that even the top leaders are challenged to easily explain how all the facets operate and work together.

The Governance Modernization Work Group is focused on:

1. **How to best create a nimble, accessible, easily understood and connected governance system focused on mission advancement and prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all areas?**

- Project research found wide-spread agreement that the current structure, processes, and tasks expected of the **AAAS Council** leave much to be desired and can be made significantly more constructive and valuable.

That being said, one fairly recent particular issue - the Revocation of Fellows Policy - is universally considered an example of how best to take advantage of the strengths and wisdom of Council members:

- A meaningful issue
- A multidisciplinary collaboration focused on the best interest of the whole
- A thoughtful, trusted process
- An iterative dialogue with stakeholders
- A process for incorporating feedback from stakeholders at several steps along the way

The Governance Modernization Work Group is focused on:

2. **How the AAAS Council might best be reimagined in structure and focus and incorporate the process elements described for the Revocation of Fellows Status?**

- **Sections** currently play a key organizational role in Fellows nominations and in shaping the focus and content of the AAAS annual meeting, as well as providing a “home” for members from their various disciplines.

Yet, the true potential of sections is hampered in their overarching siloed nature. The potential of AAAS comes not in replicating each discipline’s individual scientific society, but rather in the power of insight, knowledge, voice, and innovation generated in the multidisciplinary nature of the sections as a whole. The currently siloed system limits, rather than leverages and enhances this multidisciplinary strength and potential.

The Governance Modernization Work Group is focused on:

3. **How the AAAS sections might best be reimagined in scope and interconnected committee structure to participate a) in mission-focused, fluid multidisciplinary initiatives, and b) in interconnected work groups or committees which can focus on possible areas such as DEI, leadership development, international, membership, early career and non-academic members?**
EMERGING NOTES ON WHAT SUCCESS COULD LOOK LIKE

- Governance is meant to serve the AAAS mission of advancing science, engineering and innovation throughout the world for the benefit of all people.

- AAAS’ unique multidisciplinary strength is leveraged on behalf of mission achievement.

- The new governance system is fluid and able to pivot easily in response to emerging trends, needs, opportunities and innovations.

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a top priority of AAAS, which is demonstrated by representation in all layers of governance and in the processes of leadership identification, development, contribution, and selection results.

- Governance documents at every level, i.e., bylaws, policies, and procedures, are accessible and easy to understand. Core principles, structures, authorities and processes are stated in documents intended to be long term; and items that may need frequent adjustment to changing times are in policies and procedures that are more easily adjusted.

- The clear purpose, responsibilities, and dynamics of interaction among the arms of governance are clearly stated and understood.

- Governance structures need to:
  - Provide leaders with the opportunity to do meaningful work
  - Facilitate people easily finding a “home” – whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary
  - Inspire increased engagement and ownership of the AAAS mission
  - Increase the likelihood of effectively addressing current issues facing society

- Emerging vision for Council and Sections:
  - A primary role for AAAS Council could be to function as a place in AAAS to convene multidisciplinary and demographic perspectives in the role of a future oriented, strategic forum.
  - An emerging section model currently in development could:
    - Expand section leadership roles
    - Open opportunity to reform areas people want to see improved
    - Create multiple connections among sections around important topics such as leadership development, DEI and several others
  - An emerging shift in thinking from Representative FOR to Representative OF

  Transparency and trust in governance occurs when elected leaders understand the difference between being “representative for” vs. being “representative of.”
  - If Board or Council members believe they are “representative for,” then they see themselves as the elected representatives of a particular constituency, voice the self-interests and opinions of that constituency, and vote only on behalf of that constituency's interests.
  - Board or Council members who view their role as ensuring that the views, beliefs, values and self-interests of the constituencies they know the best are on the table as part of the conversation, are “representative of.” They ensure that others are informed of the views of the constituencies that they understand the best. They participate in a collective dialogue and deliberation based on what is in the best interests of the organization itself.