

Scaling and Sustaining Asians Are Strong: A Strategic Roadmap

Capstone Project

UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy - Master of Public Affairs

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Date: May 2, 2025



GSPP Disclaimer

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Affairs. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Goldman School of Public Policy, by the University of California, or by any other agency.

Keywords: *Asians Are Strong, Sustainability, Community, Education, Safety, Engagement, AAPI, Empowerment, Impact, Support*

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Growing up, Wallace's grandmother often spoke to him in a mix of Cantonese, Putonghua and Bahasa, which inspired his passion for people, language and culture. In college, Wallace joined several exchange programs in Poland, mainland China and the Dominican Republic, motivating him to continue his career abroad in Asia after graduating from UNC Chapel Hill.

Since then, Wallace has spent the past decade in various leadership positions developing community initiatives and creating cross-cultural opportunities for diverse youth and adults across Asia and the United States. In addition, Wallace has led humanitarian service projects for nonprofit organizations and educational institutions in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Thailand, Nepal, and Indonesia.

As Strategic Partnerships Director of VIA, Wallace hopes to continue to open doors and create pathways for young leaders to flourish by utilizing his professional experience in Asia. Wallace also currently serves as Board Director and former president of the Hong Kong American Football Legion and joined the Associate Board of Asians Are Strong in April 2025.

Acknowledgements:

- Asians Are Strong
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 - Co-Founder: Hudson Liao
 - Co-Founder: Jeremy Jong
 - Associate Board:
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 - Annie Lu
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- Richmond Area Multi Services (RAMS)
 - President/CEO - Angela Tang
- Asian Art Museum San Francisco
- Asian Women Are Strong 2025 Event Partners:
 - Hong Kong Founders
 - East West Bank
 - Hudson Pacific Properties
 - APA Heritage Foundation SF
 - Cameron House SF
 - Bright Event Rentals
 - Asian, INC.
 - Stop the Hate CA
 - Christine's
 - Dokb Studio
 - APA Family Support Services
 - Stand with Asian Americans
 - Asian Leaders Alliance
 - Korean Community Center of the East Bay
 - Asian Women's Shelter
 - Wabi Blobi
 - Asian American Women Artists Association
 - Planned Parenthood Northern California
 - The Very Asian Foundation
 - Michelle Li - Co-Founder
 - Gia Vang - Co-Founder
 - Mimi Aung - Keynote Speaker

- Amanda Ngoc Nguyen - 2022 TIME Women of the Year
- Asian Mental Health Project
 - Carrie Zhang - Founder
- Psychodrama
 - Amna Jaffer - Certified Educator
- KCCEB
 - Yeri Shon - Associate Director
- Lotus Media House
 - May Lee - Founder
- Abigail Wen - NYT Bestselling Author
- BAYCAT
 - Villy Wang - Founder
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 - Annie Tsai - Leadership Board
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- Kyoung Mi Choi - Author
- Ulash Thakore-Dunlap - Marriage and Family Therapist
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- Noriko Honda Chen - Partner, Capital Group
- Divya Ashok - Former COO, Salesforce AI
- Jenny R. Yang - Ex-Chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Carmen Chu - San Francisco City Administrator
- Gilda Gonzales - CEO Planned Parenthood Northern California
- Ivy Lee - Director of Victims Rights, San Francisco
- Michelle Lee - President, Stand with Asian Americans
- Kristy Ishii - Kristy Mariko Coaching
- Mary T. Wong - Regional Manager, East West Bank
- Molli Khangsengsing - Co-Founder, Tough Love
- Jess Gagui - CSOT/CTP

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1. Executive Summary

Asians Are Strong (AAS) was founded in March 2021 in direct response to the alarming rise in anti-Asian hate and violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization was born out of grief, anger, and a deep desire to protect and uplift the AAPI community (Asians Are Strong, n.d.). Over the past four years, AAS has mobilized a dedicated network of volunteers to host citywide events, provide community support, and empower thousands through education, advocacy, and self-defense initiatives. What makes AAS unique is that it is entirely volunteer-driven, operating without a paid staff or permanent institutional funding.

In March 2021, as news reports of escalating racist violence against Asians continued to pour in, the founders of Asians Are Strong felt an overwhelming urge to act. The Atlanta spa shootings, which resulted in the tragic murders of eight innocent people—six of whom were women of Asian descent—were particularly shocking (New York Times, 2021). Just days later, an 83-year-old Vietnamese man was attacked and hospitalized, and a 75-year-old Chinese grandmother, Xiao Zhen Xie, was brutally punched in the face in San Francisco (ABC7 News, 2021; CNN, 2021).

These and countless other incidents of hate filled the founders with a sense of urgency to make a difference. On March 17, 2021, after gathering to decompress, they shared their frustration but also found inspiration in the story of Xie, the courageous grandmother who fought back against her attacker. That night, they made a promise to themselves: they would no longer sit idly by.

The very next day, they set out to take action, brainstorming ways to directly empower the Asian community and improve their physical safety. From these discussions, the Asians Are Strong rally and movement was born (Asians Are Strong, n.d.).

1.1 Why “Asians Are Strong”?

The organization chose the name “Asians Are Strong” to address the complexity of anti-Asian hate and violence from both internal and external perspectives. The movement aims to rebuild confidence within the Asian community. The surge in violent anti-Asian hate crimes has taken a heavy toll, both physically and emotionally (National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, 2020; TAAF, 2021). Asians Are Strong seeks to remind the community of its inherent strength, offering reassurance that they are not alone in this fight, and that change is possible.

The name serves as a powerful reminder to the world that the Asian community is resilient. They are not easy targets. They are not passive. Asians Are Strong stands to challenge the harmful model minority myth and to empower the community to stand up and protect their families, their heritage, and one another (National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, 2021). Now at a pivotal moment, AAS is focused on expanding its reach and building a sustainable foundation to continue strengthening and uniting the AAPI community.

2. Introduction

Asians Are Strong (AAS) is a San Francisco-based, volunteer-led nonprofit founded in March 2021, in response to the sharp rise in anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sparked by a series of devastating attacks, including the Atlanta spa shootings and assaults on elderly Asian Americans, the organization was born from collective grief, urgency, and a deep commitment to community empowerment (New York Times, 2021; ABC7 News, 2021). A turning point came when the founders were inspired by Xiao Zhen Xie, an 83-year-old grandmother who defended herself against an attacker (CNN, 2021). The day after that story made headlines, the group took action to build a movement focused on solidarity, strength, and safety. Since then, AAS has hosted dozens of events, created educational content, and trained thousands in self-defense, becoming a trusted and visible voice in the AAPI community (Asians Are Strong, n.d.; Instagram, n.d.).

2.1 Client Introduction

AAS's mission is to protect and empower the Asian & Pacific-Islander community, and its vision is to become one of the most influential and impactful AAPI organizations in the country over the next decade (Asians Are Strong, n.d.). The organization operates through three primary pillars: Safety Resources, Community Events, and Education. Through these efforts, AAS not only equips individuals with tools to protect themselves and one another, but also fosters pride, visibility, and advocacy within and beyond the AAPI community.

What sets AAS apart is its entirely volunteer-run structure and its community-first approach. It does not receive ongoing institutional support and instead relies on partnerships, grants, donations, and a growing network of grassroots supporters (Kunreuther, 2003; Light, 2004). Much of its community-building and impact-tracking happens online, particularly through its Instagram presence. With over 20,600 followers, the AAS Instagram account functions as both a key engagement platform and a rough metric of its reach and support base (Instagram, n.d.).

Now at a critical inflection point, AAS is considering how to grow thoughtfully, expanding its programs, formalizing operations, and building financial sustainability without losing the authenticity and agility that make it powerful (Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000; Gronbjerg, 2001; Ganz, 2009).

2.2 Research Question

The key research question guiding this Capstone project is:

How can Asians Are Strong scale its operations and secure financial sustainability while maintaining its mission and impact?

Asians Are Strong (AAS) has emerged as a vital grassroots organization uplifting the AAPI community through its three core pillars: Safety Resources, Community Events, and Education. These pillars are central to AAS's approach, empowering individuals with tools to protect themselves and others, mobilizing community action through events and partnerships, and educating both AAPI communities and allies on cultural, historical, and current issues to build long-term solidarity and awareness.

- **Safety Resources**
 - AAS produces its own videos, hosts virtual workshops, offers in-person training, and creates tutorials to help people feel safer and empower them to protect themselves and their communities.
- **Community Events**
 - AAS is an event-focused organization aiming to mobilize the community to take action. They host their own events and collaborate with other community groups to build solidarity and drive impact.
- **Education**
 - AAS is committed to educating the community and its allies about historical, cultural, and current issues affecting the AAPI community. The goal is to evolve internal narratives and build broader understanding externally.

As AAS expands, it has the opportunity to create large-scale change and impact for the AAPI community, but it must do so with a clear and sustainable strategy. Since AAS currently operates with only volunteers and depends on grants, sponsorships, and donations for funding, a long-term strategy is necessary to ensure its continued growth and smooth operations.

This project will focus on developing a business model similar to the YMCA and other community driven organizations, which integrates community programming with income-generating activities, securing diverse funding sources through local, national, and private grants, and strengthening the organization's infrastructure to support its mission effectively.

To address these challenges, this project will establish a sustainable funding and growth strategy by developing a membership-based business model to support AAS's planned community center in San Francisco, identifying successful grant acquisition strategies, and diversifying funding sources to ensure long-term financial stability. Additionally, it will enhance impact measurement and advocacy efforts by creating a meaningful annual impact report to assess AAS's effectiveness and analyzing public policies that align with and advance its mission. Furthermore, the project will expand community engagement and leadership development by utilizing and strengthening AAS's leadership team, increasing operational capacity, and activating partners in the AAPI community to broaden outreach and volunteerism.

2.3 Scope

The final deliverable was a strategic plan that outlined key initiatives, funding strategies, and operational frameworks to ensure AAS's sustainable growth. This plan was presented to AAS leadership, potential funders, and key stakeholders, including nonprofit leaders, policymakers, and community advocates. By researching sustainable business models, grant strategies, and public policy navigation, the project equipped AAS with the tools needed to expand its national impact while maintaining its mission-driven, community-centered approach. Central to this effort was the development of strategies to amplify AAS's reach to diverse AAPI groups and broader communities, fostering collective action, engagement, and long-term sustainability.

The project draws on quantitative and qualitative survey data (mixed-method research) and participatory research data from the Asian Women Are Strong 2025 event.

The project does not include:

- Legal analysis or incorporation planning for the community center.
- A detailed financial plan or operational budget for AAS.
- Direct evaluation of all existing programs or internal performance metrics.
- A comprehensive fundraising strategy beyond initial guidance (grant-writing template) and promising pathways.

Instead, the goal is to provide a strategic foundation with actionable recommendations for leadership and stakeholders to build upon. The findings are tailored to AAS's unique identity as a volunteer-led, community-first initiative and are intended to inform high-level, decision-making about the organization's next phase.

3. Review of the Literature

The rise of anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased attention to the needs of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. While this has spurred a wave of advocacy, existing literature highlights persistent gaps in philanthropic funding and strategic support for AAPI-led nonprofits. Reports from the Asian American Foundation (2021), the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (2020), and the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (2021) reveal that AAPI organizations receive less than 0.5% of all philanthropic dollars in the United States, despite representing more than 7% of the population. These findings underscore the urgent need for long-term infrastructure investment. However, current research largely overlooks the unique challenges of emerging, volunteer-led groups like Asians Are Strong (AAS) that operate with minimal institutional support.

Asians Are Strong (AAS) operates within a broader landscape of AAPI organizations working to address issues of community safety, advocacy, and empowerment in the San Francisco Bay Area. Among these organizations, the API Council and AAPI Women Lead stand out as key players with missions and activities that align with AAS's goals.

The API Council focuses on strengthening the AAPI community by advocating for policies that enhance the rights and well-being of all AAPI people. This network of AAPI-serving organizations works across the Bay Area to address community needs, support civil rights, and build social, economic, and political power for the AAPI community. Their work is crucial in advancing both grassroots initiatives and broader advocacy efforts to improve the AAPI community's status in society (API Council, n.d.).

Similarly, AAPI Women Lead specifically empowers AAPI women and girls by focusing on leadership development, mental health advocacy, and community building. AAPI Women Lead provides resources and opportunities for Asian women to step into leadership roles, fostering an environment where their voices and contributions are amplified in spaces traditionally dominated by others. Their emphasis on intersectionality and the unique experiences of AAPI women makes them a vital force in the ongoing movement for equality and justice (AAPI Women Lead, n.d.).

In comparison, Asians Are Strong (AAS) is more grassroots and volunteer-driven, focusing primarily on community engaging events, self-defense and safety, and educational programming. Unlike the API Council and AAPI Women Lead, which have broader policy or gender-specific focuses, AAS is deeply invested in providing immediate, tangible resources for community members through workshops, large scale events, and training aimed at empowerment and physical safety.

While the API Council and AAPI Women Lead work more broadly on advocacy and creating systemic change through policy and leadership initiatives, AAS takes a hands-on approach to address the immediate needs of the community, helping individuals protect themselves and raise awareness within their own circles.

The power of grassroots organizing, especially movements rooted in identity and community, is well documented by scholars such as Marshall Ganz (2009). Their work emphasizes the role of personal storytelling, emotional connection, and distributed leadership in building lasting movements. However, most of this research centers on policy or electoral campaigns. There is a significant gap in understanding how grassroots organizations focused on cultural safety and self-empowerment, such as AAS, develop legitimacy, grow sustainably, and remain aligned with their communities' evolving needs.

In parallel, research on nonprofit sustainability offers cautionary insights about the risks faced by social change organizations. Paul Light (2004) and Frances Kunreuther (2003) both note that groups with strong missions but limited infrastructure are particularly vulnerable to burnout, mission drift, and financial instability. These scholars advocate for capacity-building and long-term strategic planning as tools to sustain impact. Yet, few studies have addressed how these recommendations translate to racially and culturally specific movements like AAS.

Meanwhile, literature on nonprofit hybrid models provides a useful framework for reimagining financial sustainability. Organizations like the YMCA serve as examples of how community-driven programs can be supported through membership models, earned income, and philanthropic support (Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000; Gronbjerg, 2001). These models suggest a promising path forward for organizations like AAS. However, much of this research does not consider the added significance of culturally grounded space, where healing, solidarity, and safety converge, particularly in communities that face racialized violence.

4. Methodology

The research methodology for the Asians Are Strong (AAS) Capstone Project aimed to identify effective strategies for scaling the organization nationally while ensuring its financial sustainability. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative, quantitative, and participatory research techniques to provide a thorough analysis of AAS's growth potential. The primary objectives of the research were to develop a sustainable funding and growth strategy for AAS, enhance impact measurement and advocacy through structured reporting, and expand community engagement and leadership development. To address these objectives, the study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to answer key research questions, including how AAS could develop a self-sustaining business model, secure grants and diversified funding, effectively measure and communicate its impact, and apply best practices from similar nonprofit models.

Key Evaluation Criteria:

- **Efficiency**
Maximizing impact while minimizing the use of resources such as time, money, or effort. In practice, this means achieving the greatest benefit to the community in the most resource-effective way.
- **Process Values**
Focus on the *how* – ensuring that decision-making and implementation are transparent, inclusive, and fair. This includes accessibility, stakeholder participation, and procedural fairness.
- **Legality & Mobilization**
Ensures all actions comply with existing laws while also gauging how well the initiative activates community support and civic engagement.
- **Equity, Fairness & Justice**
Centers on the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, especially for historically marginalized or underrepresented groups. Prioritizes inclusive and just outcomes

The project's first major objective is to establish a sustainable funding and growth strategy. This includes the development of a membership-based business model to support the organization's long-term goal of opening a community center in San Francisco. Financial modeling and quantitative analysis will assess potential revenue streams such as memberships, event sponsorships, and grants. Comparative case studies of similar nonprofit organizations will offer insight into how community-driven missions can be paired with effective, diversified income models. Semi-structured interviews with nonprofit leaders, grant managers, and corporate sponsors will inform the development of robust funding strategies. These approaches aim to maximize efficiency by identifying the most impactful strategies with the least resource expenditure, while also supporting legal compliance and community mobilization through models that engage broad support.

To improve impact measurement and advocacy, the project will design a framework for an annual impact report that includes both qualitative and quantitative measures. This will allow

AAS to evaluate its effectiveness and better communicate its outcomes to funders, stakeholders, and community members. A review of public policies and philanthropic funding trends at the local, state, and national levels will help AAS identify advocacy opportunities and areas for deeper alignment. This work reflects process values by creating systems for transparent and participatory evaluation, while also ensuring that outcomes are equitable and just.

Quantitative data were collected to assess AAS's financial status, community reach, and event effectiveness. Structured surveys were conducted with AWAS 2025 event attendees, volunteers, and donors to gauge engagement levels, satisfaction, and willingness to contribute financially. A sample size of at least 100 respondents was targeted, representing different demographics. Key data points included awareness of AAS's mission, perceived impact, and willingness to support the organization through membership models. Additionally, an analysis of AAS's financial status involved reviewing existing grant applications and funding sources, comparing AAS's financial model with those of similar nonprofits, and using financial modeling to project potential revenue streams.

Qualitative research consisted of semi-structured interviews with AAS leadership, volunteers, corporate sponsors, and community partners to gather insights on funding strategies and scalability. The study engaged twelve key stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and nonprofit executives who all joined the AWAS 2025 event. Furthermore, case studies through a series of meetings (online and in-person) with Richmond Area Multi Services Inc (RAMS) – a AWAS event partner – were analyzed to identify best practices in funding, community engagement, and policy navigation. The research also included a review of local, state, and federal policies that affected nonprofit funding and community advocacy, along with reports from government agencies and philanthropic organizations to identify trends in AAPI-focused funding and advocacy opportunities.

Participatory research methods were integrated through listening and discussion sessions held during AWAS 2025 events and workshops. These sessions created space for both AAPI partners and the general audience to reflect on how AAS was addressing community needs and to share feedback in real time. Recordings in the form of Youtube videos were made of these sessions (with participant consent), allowing for accurate transcription and in-depth analysis. The transcripts were examined thematically to identify recurring issues, desired programming, and perceptions of AAS's impact. This participatory element ensured that the community's voice was embedded directly into the research findings and strategy development, and helped validate AAS's current approaches while illuminating areas for improvement or expansion.

For the data analysis, Google Forms was used to collect and organize survey data, which was then analyzed to identify trends in engagement and funding preferences. The built-in analysis tools in Google Forms were utilized to generate visual representations of responses, such as bar charts and pie charts, to help understand patterns in community feedback. In addition to the survey data, financial forecasting models were employed to project potential revenue streams from membership fees, event sponsorships, partnerships, and grant funding. Qualitative data

from interview and focus group transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, which helped identify common themes and insights regarding challenges and opportunities for AAS's expansion. Content analysis of policy documents and case studies assisted in pinpointing relevant public funding sources and effective advocacy strategies.

This mixed-methods and participatory approach ensured a comprehensive and community-grounded understanding of AAS's opportunities and challenges. The quantitative data provided measurable insights into financial sustainability and community engagement, while qualitative and participatory research offered in-depth perspectives from stakeholders and constituents. The use of surveys, financial data analysis, interviews, focus groups, listening sessions, case studies, and policy analysis collectively informed strategic pathways for AAS's sustainable growth and increased impact.

4.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this Capstone project was guided by a values-driven evaluation framework rooted in four primary criteria co-developed with the leadership of Asians Are Strong: Efficiency, Process Values, Legality & Mobilization, and Equity, Fairness & Justice. These values reflect a commitment to both pragmatic and principled action, ensuring that all research and recommendations remain closely aligned with AAS's mission to protect and empower the AAPI community.

In addition to this values-based lens, the project was informed by Eugene Bardach's Eightfold Path to policy analysis, which provided a structured, iterative approach to defining the problem, assembling evidence, and evaluating alternatives (Bardach & Patashnik, 2023). This framework of melding Bardach's pragmatic steps with AAS's mission-driven criterium, ensured that the final strategic recommendations were not only feasible and impactful, but also ethically grounded and community-responsive.

4.1.1 Approach

The approach centers around several key strategies to address AAS's goals for long-term growth, sustainability, and increased community impact:

- **Establish a sustainable funding and growth strategy** - Develop a membership-based business model to support a community center in San Francisco (long-term plan), identify successful grant acquisition strategies, and diversify funding sources to ensure long-term financial stability.
- **Enhance impact measurement and advocacy** - Create a meaningful annual impact report to evaluate AAS's effectiveness and analyze public policies that align with and advance its mission.

- **Expand community engagement and leadership development** - Strengthen AAS's leadership team to manage growth, increase operational capacity, and engage AAPI youth—especially on college campuses—to expand outreach and volunteerism.

4.1.2 Alternatives

Several alternatives were considered to address AAS's needs for growth and sustainability. Each alternative was evaluated using the four guiding criteria: *Efficiency*, *Process Values*, *Legality & Mobilization*, and *Equity, Fairness & Justice*.

1. No-Change (Status Quo) Alternative

Continue operating as a volunteer-based nonprofit relying on grassroots fundraising, ad hoc donations, and event-based revenue.

- **Efficiency:** Limited ability to scale operations due to reliance on volunteers and inconsistent funding.
- **Process Values:** Maintains AAS's grassroots integrity but does not provide long-term sustainability.
- **Legality and Mobilization:** No regulatory concerns but limited leverage of public policies.
- **Equity, Fairness, and Justice:** Impact remains localized, limiting outreach to underserved AAPI communities.

2. Membership-Based Model

Establish a paid membership structure for access to community events, community center programs, workshops, and self-defense classes and other AAS resources.

- **Efficiency:** Creates a stable, recurring revenue stream, reducing reliance on donations.
- **Process Values:** Aligns with AAS's mission by fostering community engagement.
- **Legality and Mobilization:** Requires legal structuring for membership-based revenue, tax implications, and financial oversight.
- **Equity, Fairness, and Justice:** Risk of excluding lower-income members; must ensure accessible sliding-scale pricing.

3. Hybrid Funding Model (Grants + Social Enterprise)

Secure consistent funding through local, national, and private grants while launching a social enterprise (e.g., selling self-defense classes, AAPI cultural merchandise, or training services to businesses and organizations).

- **Efficiency:** Diversifies funding and aligns with AAS's skill sets.
- **Process Values:** Balances nonprofit mission with financial independence.

- **Legality and Mobilization:** Requires compliance with grant regulations and nonprofit revenue restrictions.
- **Equity, Fairness, and Justice:** Ensures programs remain accessible, but commercial elements must not overshadow core mission.

4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) with Corporations, Organizations, Government

Collaborate with city agencies, organizations and corporations for sponsorships, in-kind support, and shared program development.

- **Efficiency:** Leverages external resources, reducing financial strain.
- **Process Values:** Expands legitimacy and access to broader networks.
- **Legality and Mobilization:** Requires navigating government funding compliance and corporate partnership ethics.
- **Equity, Fairness, and Justice:** Potential misalignment with AAS's mission; must ensure partnerships do not dilute advocacy efforts.

5. Youth Engagement Model

Establish AAS college chapters to activate AAPI youth and develop a leadership pipeline.

- **Efficiency:** Expands volunteer base with dedicated youth leadership programs and initiatives.
- **Process Values:** Strengthens AAS's long-term impact through youth mobilization.
- **Legality and Mobilization:** Requires formal agreements with universities, high schools/middle schools, partner youth organizations for affiliation.
- **Equity, Fairness, and Justice:** Increases engagement but may overlook AAPI youth outside these systems

6. Annual Impact Report + Advocacy Framework

Develop a structured impact reporting system to measure program effectiveness and inform policy advocacy efforts.

- **Efficiency:** Strengthens AAS's case for funding and policy influence.
- **Process Values:** Increases transparency and accountability.
- **Legality and Mobilization:** No major legal barriers; enhances public policy leverage.
- **Equity, Fairness, and Justice:** Ensures marginalized AAPI voices are included in advocacy efforts.

A phased approach combining the Hybrid Funding Model, Public-Private Partnerships, Membership-Based Model, and Youth Engagement offers the best balance of financial sustainability, mission alignment, and community impact. By integrating impact measurements, AAS can scale effectively while preserving its core values and long-term viability.

4.2 Data Analysis

The "Asian Women Are Strong: Main Character Energy" (AWAS 2025) event that took place March 8, 2025, at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, provided an ideal opportunity for Asians Are Strong to assess its progress toward answering the research question: How can AAS scale its operations and secure financial sustainability while maintaining its mission and impact?

This event, focused on empowering Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women, featured a full day of activities aimed at promoting physical, mental, emotional, family, and career health. These activities, which included self-defense classes, wellness sessions, interactive art displays, performances, and resource workshops, served as the perfect setting to collect both quantitative and qualitative data that could inform AAS's strategies for sustainable growth and increased community engagement.

Quantitative data were collected to assess AAS's financial status, community reach, and event effectiveness. Structured surveys were conducted with AWAS 2025 event attendees, volunteers, and donors to gauge engagement levels, satisfaction, and willingness to contribute financially. A sample size of at least 100 respondents was targeted, representing different demographics. Key data points included awareness of AAS's mission, perceived impact, and willingness to support the organization through membership models. Additionally, an analysis of AAS's financial status involved reviewing existing grant applications and funding sources, comparing AAS's financial model with those of similar nonprofits, and using financial modeling to project potential revenue streams.

Qualitative research consisted of semi-structured interviews with AAS leadership, volunteers, corporate sponsors, and community partners to gather insights on funding strategies and scalability. The study engaged twelve key stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and nonprofit executives who all joined the AWAS 2025 event. Furthermore, case studies through a series of meetings (online and in-person) with [Richmond Area Multi Services Inc \(RAMS\)](#) – a AWAS event partner – were analyzed to identify best practices in funding, community engagement, and policy navigation. The research also included a review of local, state, and federal policies that affected nonprofit funding and community advocacy, along with reports from government agencies and philanthropic organizations to identify trends in AAPI-focused funding and advocacy opportunities.

Participatory research methods were integrated through listening and discussion sessions held during AWAS 2025 events and workshops. These sessions created space for both AAPI partners and the general audience to reflect on how AAS was addressing community needs and to share feedback in real time. Recordings in the form of Youtube videos were made of these sessions (with participant consent), allowing for accurate transcription and in-depth analysis. The transcripts were examined thematically to identify recurring issues, desired programming, and perceptions of AAS's impact. This participatory element ensured that the community's voice was embedded directly into the research findings and strategy development, and helped validate AAS's current approaches while illuminating areas for improvement or expansion.

For the data analysis, Google Forms was used to collect and organize survey data, which was then analyzed to identify trends in engagement and funding preferences. The built-in analysis tools in Google Forms were utilized to generate visual representations of responses, such as bar charts and pie charts, to help understand patterns in community feedback. In addition to the survey data, financial forecasting models were employed to project potential revenue streams from membership fees, event sponsorships, partnerships, and grant funding. Qualitative data from interview and focus group transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, which helped identify common themes and insights regarding challenges and opportunities for AAS's expansion. Content analysis of policy documents and case studies assisted in pinpointing relevant public funding sources and effective advocacy strategies.

This mixed-methods and participatory approach ensured a comprehensive and community-grounded understanding of AAS's opportunities and challenges. The quantitative data provided measurable insights into financial sustainability and community engagement, while qualitative and participatory research offered in-depth perspectives from stakeholders and constituents. The use of surveys, financial data analysis, interviews, focus groups, listening sessions, case studies, and policy analysis collectively informed strategic pathways for AAS's sustainable growth and increased impact.

The final outcome of this Capstone will be a strategic plan that outlines clear initiatives, funding strategies, and operational recommendations to guide AAS's sustainable growth. This plan will be presented to AAS leadership, funders, and key stakeholders, including nonprofit executives, policymakers, and community advocates. By combining research on sustainable business models, grant acquisition, participatory methods, and policy navigation, this project aims to equip AAS with the tools it needs to expand its reach, strengthen its infrastructure, and build long-term impact in alignment with its community-rooted mission.

4.3 Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the sustainability, impact, and effectiveness of Asians Are Strong, there are several constraints that must be acknowledged, as these limitations may impact the generalizability and interpretation of the findings.

- **Survey Data Research Participants Limited to AAS Event Attendees**
 - The survey data collection was conducted exclusively with participants of the "Asian Women Are Strong 2025" event. Consequently, the sample only reflects the perspectives of individuals who attended this specific gathering, limiting the generalizability of the findings to the broader AAPI community. Moreover, several Asian ethnic groups, such as Hmong, Bhutanese, Pacific Islander, and certain Southeast Asian communities, were not meaningfully represented among attendees or respondents. As a result, the research may not fully capture the

diverse range of experiences, needs, and perspectives across the entire AAPI diaspora.

- **Potential Bias in Qualitative Research from Key Stakeholders**
 - The qualitative research involved interviews and focus groups with 12 key stakeholders who were primarily partners of AAS or already advocates and leaders in the AAPI community, particularly within the AAPI Women's sector. This selection could introduce bias in the findings, as these participants may have pre-existing positive opinions or vested interests in the organization, potentially influencing their feedback. Their perspectives, while valuable, may not fully represent the range of views within the broader AAPI community.
- **Survey Only Available in English**
 - The survey was only provided in English, which may have excluded individuals with limited English proficiency, particularly within a diverse immigrant community like AAPI. This language limitation could skew the data, as non-English speakers or individuals from more linguistically isolated backgrounds may have had difficulty participating, resulting in an underrepresentation of certain AAPI subgroups and their unique needs.
- **Bias in Participatory Research Due to Topic Selection**
 - The participatory research component included community discussion sessions, but the topics for these sessions were pre-selected by AAS and its partners. While these topics were designed to align with the mission of AAS, the selection process may have inadvertently limited the range of issues discussed, potentially excluding other pressing topics or concerns that the community might have wanted to address. This bias could limit the diversity of feedback and perspectives gathered during these sessions.
- **Bias in Responses to Future Payment Willingness Due to the Free Nature of the Event**
 - Since the "Asian Women Are Strong" event was free to attend, participants may have been less likely to express interest in paying for future programs or events. This discrepancy may lead to biased responses regarding willingness to pay, as attendees who benefited from a free event might be less inclined to support a paid model in the future, even if they would be willing to do so under different circumstances.
- **Limited Sample Size for Survey Responses**
 - The study aimed for a sample size of at least 100 respondents for the survey, which, while a reasonable target for capturing trends, still represents a small fraction of the total event participants (over 2000 attendees). A larger sample size could provide more robust and statistically significant findings, increasing the representativeness and reliability of the data.
- **Sampling Bias in Event Participants**
 - Given that the event was free and hosted at the Asian Art Museum, the attendees likely had certain socioeconomic and cultural characteristics that may not reflect the full diversity within the AAPI community. For example, individuals with access to transportation, the internet, or cultural capital may have been more

likely to attend, leading to a potential bias in the types of individuals who participated and their experiences.

Despite the limitations outlined above, the findings of this study remain valuable for several key reasons. First, the participants involved, though not fully representative of the entire AAPI community, were deeply engaged with the mission of AAS. This engagement provides important insights into the organization's immediate impact and the needs of a committed demographic within the community. These individuals are active supporters of AAS and their feedback can provide meaningful guidance for refining AAS's programs and outreach.

Additionally, while the key stakeholders interviewed were primarily advocates and leaders within the AAPI community, their insights offer crucial perspectives on the operational challenges and opportunities that AAS faces. These stakeholders possess deep knowledge of the community's needs, and their recommendations are rooted in years of experience within the nonprofit sector. This expertise strengthens the validity of their feedback and provides a solid foundation for the study's conclusions.

The participatory approach used in the study, which included feedback from community members through listening sessions and workshops, further ensures that the voices of those directly engaged with AAS were heard. Although the topics of discussion were chosen by AAS and its partners, this participatory element created space for community members to reflect on the organization's work and provide feedback in real time. This integration of community input helped validate AAS's existing approaches while highlighting areas for improvement and expansion.

Moreover, the mixed-methods approach utilized in the study, combining qualitative interviews, surveys, and participatory research, provides a well-rounded view of AAS's impact and challenges. By triangulating data from multiple sources, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. This helps mitigate potential biases, providing a more reliable set of findings that can inform AAS's strategies for growth and sustainability.

Finally, the recommendations offered in this study are actionable and grounded in the specific needs of the AAPI community. While the findings may not be fully generalizable to all AAPI individuals, they provide valuable guidance for the future development of AAS's programs and funding strategies. By taking these findings into account, AAS can make informed decisions that will help strengthen its operations and better serve its community. Despite the study's limitations, its insights contribute meaningfully to the organization's mission and future impact.

4.4 Positionality

As a first-generation Hong Kong-American immigrant, my identity and lived experiences have profoundly shaped my commitment to fostering opportunities for diverse individuals to thrive. My Capstone project with Asians Are Strong (AAS) is a natural extension of my lifelong dedication

to cross-cultural exchange, education access, and increasing Asian representation. Understanding my positionality allows me to approach this work with self-awareness, ensuring that I engage with the community ethically and effectively.

My journey has been defined by a deep belief in the transformative power of sports and education. Beginning my career in startup ventures, I spearheaded initiatives to create pathways for diverse youth and adults. First joining a startup sports academy in Hong Kong, I facilitated the development of physical and life skills for over 800 local and international student athletes through teamwork and discipline. Later, as General Manager of Shanghai's largest international youth sports organization, I expanded opportunities for young athletes to compete globally, fostering their educational and athletic pursuits. My work not only empowered student-athletes to earn scholarships but also pushed workplace diversity by advocating for and leading a multicultural team from China, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. These experiences reinforced my dedication to equitable access, inclusion, and leadership development.

I returned to Hong Kong in 2019 to join an international education company building international school campuses across Asia. In the midst of COVID and political unrest, I led a team to build a new international school with the focus of providing children in HK access to higher education in Europe through cross-cultural exchange between the UK and China.

Currently, as Strategic Relationship Director at VIA Programs (Volunteers in Asia), I continue to bridge cultural divides through experiential learning programs. Our initiatives, such as sending American fellows to support Thai community partners and providing free educational opportunities for Burmese migrant youths, align closely with my passion for transnational education and representation. My role at VIA encapsulates my lifelong mission of creating spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can engage, learn, and grow together.

My connection to Asians Are Strong was deeply personal. After spending over a decade in Hong Kong and Shanghai, my return to the U.S. was filled with uncertainty. The rise in AAPI hate crimes, political tensions, and socioeconomic challenges made me eager to reconnect with my heritage and find a community that resonated with my values. Upon meeting Hudson and Zeien, AAS's founders, I was inspired by their vision of empowering Asian Americans, amplifying our voices, and celebrating our culture to foster unity and dismantle societal barriers. Their mission felt like an extension of my own values, and I was eager to contribute.

Since joining AAS, I have actively volunteered at events that celebrate and strengthen the AAPI community, including the Asian Women Are Strong Conference, the Latino x Asian Cookout Food Festival, the World of Dumplings event, and the annual AAS 5K Marathon. These initiatives have collectively engaged over 20,000 attendees from diverse backgrounds across the Bay Area, reinforcing my belief in the power of cultural exchange and community building. My professional and personal commitment to equity, representation, and cross-cultural collaboration aligns seamlessly with AAS's objectives, making it a fitting organization for my Capstone project.

My positionality affords me both advantages and challenges in my work with AAS. Having navigated leadership roles in nonprofit, education, and business sectors across Asia and the U.S., I bring a unique cultural perspective that helps me understand the social, racial, and political nuances that impact the AAPI community. My background enables me to approach policy analysis and community collaboration with a nuanced and intersectional lens. However, I also recognize the privilege that comes with my education, career trajectory, and leadership roles, which may shape my perspective differently from other members of the community. To mitigate bias, I commit to active listening, engaging with diverse stakeholders, and ensuring that my research and policy recommendations reflect the needs and aspirations of the community rather than solely my own interpretations.

Through my Capstone project, I aim to leverage my skills in strategic planning, marketing, and program development to help AAS scale its impact nationally and establish long-term sustainability. My experiences in fundraising, cross-sector partnerships, and data-driven decision-making will inform my approach, ensuring that AAS's growth remains community-centered and mission-driven. Ultimately, my goal is to use my knowledge and networks to empower AAS and the broader AAPI community, fostering systemic change and building a stronger, more inclusive society.

5. Findings and Results

This section presents the outcomes of the multi-method survey and participatory data collection process designed to evaluate the impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of the *Asian Women Are Strong: Main Character Energy* event held on March 8, 2025, at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. Data was gathered through community-engaged surveys, survey questionnaires with focus groups (event stakeholders and partners), and participatory observations across 2,000+ attendees, speakers, vendors, and partners. A total of 122 attendees participated in the General Public Event Survey and a total of 12 key stakeholders and partners participated in the Partners Survey & Questionnaire.

General Public Event Survey Findings and Results (General Public Survey Data - AWAS 2025)

5.1. Strong Mission Alignment & Community Impact

Survey and interview data reveal a powerful alignment between the event's content and Asians Are Strong (AAS)'s mission to uplift and empower Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women.

- **General Public Event Survey Rating:** 4.84/5 average alignment score with AAS's mission.
- **Themes Identified:**
 - Celebration of Asian women's voices.
 - Creation of a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment.
 - Attendee recognition of the event as a vital platform for representation and community-building.

Insight: AAS has succeeded in delivering programming that deeply resonates with its core values and audience.

5.2. High-Value Event Components

Participants consistently cited specific event features as particularly meaningful:

- Cultural and wellness-focused resource booths.
- Relatable and inspirational speaker stories.
- Panels and workshops on identity, workplace experiences, mental health, and healing.
- Free accessibility, which allowed for wide participation.
- Emotional resonance and shared unity among attendees.

Insight: Future events should continue to prioritize interactive booths, diverse and relatable speakers, and community-based activities.

5.3. Community Risk Perception: Loss of Space and Representation

A majority of respondents expressed concern about the loss of the event in future years:

- **112 mentions** of the event as an essential space for connection and support.
- **107 mentions** of concern around reduced representation.
- **99 mentions** highlighting the loss of high-impact panels and workshops.
- **89 mentions** of weakened community networks and mentorship pipelines.

Insight: AAS should leverage this sense of community necessity to strengthen its case to funders, sponsors, and policy stakeholders.

5.4. Willingness to Contribute Financially

Feedback indicates significant openness to financially supporting future events:

- **82.7%** of respondents expressed a willingness to pay for tickets:
 - 28.1% likely at \$10–\$20.
 - 24.8% very likely even at \$20+.
 - 29.8% maybe, depending on content.
 - 17.4% preferred free events.

Partner survey data echoed this:

- **45%** of vendor respondents supported vendor fees between \$50–\$150.

Insight: AAS can introduce a **hybrid tiered funding model** (e.g., free general admission, \$10–\$25 premium experiences) and offer fee-based vendor participation with added value.

5.5. Audience Demographics & Support Preferences

The event drew a multigenerational but millennial/Gen X-majority audience:

- **Age Breakdown:**
 - 25–44 years: 54.9%
 - 45–64 years: 34.4%
 - Others: <11%

Preferred ways to support AAS:

- 94 mentions: Spreading the word.
- 71 mentions: Volunteering.
- 31 mentions: Donating.

Insight: Capitalize on strong word-of-mouth enthusiasm with an ambassador program and strengthen volunteer engagement through structured roles. Introduce low-barrier, in-event donation opportunities (e.g., raffles, branded merchandise).

5.6. Areas for Improvement

Participants offered constructive feedback to strengthen future programming:

- Increased **networking opportunities**.
- More **visibility for vendors** and smaller organizations.
- Greater **Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander** speaker representation.
- **Gamified experiences** for higher engagement.
- Clearer communication about **AAS's broader mission** outside the event.

Insights:

- Integrate **structured networking** into the event (e.g., mentorship meetups, facilitated discussions).
- Improve **event communications** before and after via email campaigns and social media.
- Expand representation and interaction with underrepresented AAPI communities.

Partner & Stakeholders Survey/Questionnaire Findings and Results (Event Partners Survey Data - AWAS 2025)

This survey questionnaire gathered feedback from **12 partners** who engaged with the “Asian Women Are Strong: Main Character Energy” event in roles such as **vendors, speakers, panelists, and workshop leaders**. The purpose was to better understand how AAS can **vet potential partners** and identify pathways toward **financial sustainability** while maintaining strong **mission alignment**.

5.7. Overall Experience and Mission Alignment

- **Average Rating:** Respondents rated their experience **4.83 out of 5**.
- **Common Highlights:**
 - Efficient and supportive event **logistics and volunteers**.
 - Vibrant **community energy** and high attendee engagement.
 - Strong appreciation for the **quality of panels and speakers**.

5.8. Future Participation and Financial Contribution

- **Event Re-engagement:**
 - **100%** of respondents expressed interest in participating in future AAS events.
- **Vendor Fee Support:**
 - **5 of 12 respondents (45%)** supported a vendor fee between **\$50–\$150**.

- 1 was hesitant, depending on cost/benefit balance.
1 did not provide a response.
- **Insight:** A **tiered vendor fee model** (e.g., basic vs. premium) could be a financially sustainable option.

5.9. Improvements and Resource Needs

- **Common Suggestions:**
 - Provide **clear name tags or role identification**.
 - Create more **networking opportunities** before and after sessions.
 - Improve **vendor visibility** to increase foot traffic and engagement.
- **Insight:** High satisfaction with only **minor logistical recommendations**.

5.10. Willingness to Contribute Beyond Events

- **Support Beyond Participation:**
 - **8 of 12 respondents (67%)** expressed interest in **donating, sponsoring, or volunteering**.
 - **4** shared their emails for future outreach.
- **Requested Resources:**
 - **Social media toolkits** (pre-made posts and captions) to amplify impact.
 - Opportunities for **mentorship and collaboration** were noted as key motivators.

5.11. Potential Partner and Donor Connections

- **Corporate/Community Leads:**
 - **6–8 of 12 respondents** indicated **connections to sponsors, donors, or partner organizations**.
 - Some named **specific organizations**, suggesting strong leads for outreach.

Participatory Research: Community Discussion Sessions and Workshops

At the Asian Women Are Strong (AWAS) 2025 event held at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, over 2,000 attendees gathered to engage with a series of publicly held discussion sessions and workshops that facilitated meaningful dialogue between AAPI community leaders and the broader public. These participatory sessions, emceed by Michelle Li (NBC Bay Area journalist and Co-Founder of the Very Asian Foundation) and Zeien Cheung (Co-Founder of Asians Are Strong), were a central part of the day's programming and were recorded and published on the Asians Are Strong YouTube channel for broader public access and future impact assessment (Participatory Research - Asians Are Strong AWAS 2025a-g).

Each panel addressed a critical theme relevant to the experiences, resilience, and aspirations of Asian and Pacific Islander women and communities:

- **Keynote Address: Mimi Aung** – Burmese-American space engineer and project leader of NASA's Mars Ingenuity Helicopter, spoke about Asian representation and leadership in STEM fields.
- **A Tiger Mom and Her Cub: Modern Parenting for Asian Women and Daughters**
 - *Deborah Liu* (Former CEO of Ancestry)
 - *Bethany Liu* (Daughter)
 - *Moderator: Annie Tsai* (COO, Interact; Leadership Board, Moms in Tech) (Asians Are Strong, 2025a)
- **New Trends in Mental Health**
 - *Carrie Zhang* (Founder, Asian Mental Health Project)
 - *Angela Tang* (Executive Director, RAMS)
 - *Amna Jaffer* (Certified Psychodrama Educator)
 - *Moderator: Yeri Shon* (Associate Director, KCCEB) (Asians Are Strong, 2025b)
- **Conquering Your Past: Intergenerational Healing**
 - *Kyoung Mi Choi, Ulash Thakore-Dunlap, Soo Jin Lee, Ellie Yang Camp*
 - *Moderator: Dr. Helen Hsu* (Asians Are Strong, 2025c)
- **Own Your Narrative: The Power of Telling Your Story**
 - *Gayle Romasanta, Tamyln Tomita, Abigail Wen, Villy Wang*
 - *Moderator: May Lee* (Asians Are Strong, 2025d)
- **Overcoming Imposter Syndrome**
 - *Victoria Fu, Gloria Lu, Ashlyn So, Anh Phoong* (Asians Are Strong, 2025e)
- **Breakthrough Performance: Thriving as Asian Women at Work**
 - *Edith Yeung, Noriko Honda Chen, Belinda Li, Divya Shok*

- *Moderator: Zeien Cheung*
(Asians Are Strong, 2025f)
- **Fireside Chat: Saving Five**
 - *Amanda Nguyen* (Activist, TIME Woman of the Year, Nobel Peace Prize nominee)
 - *Moderator: Gia Vang* (NBC Bay Area journalist)
(Asians Are Strong, 2025g)

These participatory research sessions provided rich qualitative data through real-time community engagement, story-sharing, and reflective dialogue. The recordings are being analyzed through thematic coding to identify recurring concerns, hopes, and calls to action expressed by AAPI women and allies. These findings will inform future AAS initiatives, program design, and advocacy strategies, ensuring that community voices directly shape organizational growth. Furthermore, the public nature of these discussions supports transparency and aligns with AAS's commitment to equity, inclusion, and cultural empowerment.

6. Policy Alternatives

The Capstone project for Asians Are Strong was designed to explore how the organization can scale its operations and secure long-term financial sustainability while remaining rooted in its mission of empowering AAPI communities. Utilizing a mixed-methods research approach, including quantitative surveys and participatory workshops conducted at the 2025 Asian Women Are Strong (AWAS) event, the project gathered insights from event attendees, community members, and organizational partners. These findings informed projections for a range of potential organizational growth strategies and were used to craft specific, actionable policy recommendations.

The projected outcomes and recommendations presented here were developed with an explicit focus on maximizing efficiency (delivering the greatest community benefit with the fewest resources), upholding process values such as transparency, inclusion, and fairness, and ensuring alignment with legal standards and civic mobilization goals. Each proposed strategy was evaluated against these criteria, alongside AAS's ongoing commitment to equity, fairness, and justice, ensuring that historically marginalized AAPI voices remain centered.

6.1 Analysis & Recommendations

6.1.1. No-Change (Status Quo) Alternative

Outcome: AAS continues with its grassroots structure, with limited ability to scale or reach a broader audience. While it preserves its integrity and mission, it struggles to maintain consistent funding and resources.

Risk Analysis: Continued financial instability could lead to program cutbacks, reducing AAS's ability to serve underserved AAPI communities. This scenario presents challenges to long-term efficiency and equity due to constrained resources.

Mitigation: Establish a volunteer-driven advisory board focused on strategic fundraising. Prioritize outreach to small foundations and partnerships with established community-based organizations for additional support.

Recommendation: Establish a structured volunteer-driven advisory board focused on fundraising and strategic growth. Prioritize small foundation grants and partnerships with established community-based organizations to ensure sustainability while maintaining grassroots integrity.

6.1.2. Membership-Based Model

Outcome: Creates a more reliable income stream and greater engagement through community programs.

Risk Analysis: If membership fees are too high, AAS may unintentionally exclude individuals from low-income or marginalized backgrounds, undermining goals of equity, fairness, and accessibility.

Mitigation: Implement a sliding scale fee structure, offer scholarships to underserved participants, and maintain free community events to ensure broad inclusivity.

Recommendation: Implement a tiered membership system with a sliding scale fee structure. Offer scholarships and free community events to maintain inclusivity. Regularly assess membership impact and financial sustainability to ensure equitable access to AAS programs.

6.1.3. Hybrid Funding Model (Grants + Social Enterprise)

Outcome: A diverse funding mix strengthens financial sustainability while maintaining program accessibility.

Risk Analysis: The introduction of commercial activities may risk mission drift or create a perception that AAS is prioritizing profit over advocacy, possibly undermining stakeholder trust and process transparency.

Mitigation: Clearly define the role of social enterprise within the organization, ensure all profits are transparently reinvested into core programs, and conduct regular stakeholder reviews to uphold mission integrity.

Recommendation: Define a clear balance between nonprofit advocacy and social enterprise ventures. Establish transparency mechanisms to ensure all profits are reinvested into AAS programs.

6.1.4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) with Corporations, Organizations, Government

Outcome: Expands AAS's reach and access to external resources, facilitating new programs and broader advocacy.

Risk Analysis: External partners may seek to influence programming or advocacy, which could compromise AAS's independence and credibility, particularly if corporate interests do not align with its mission.

Mitigation: Create a formal vetting process for all partnerships based on mission alignment, ethical guidelines, and legal compliance. Regularly assess partnerships to preserve organizational values and transparency.

Recommendation: Develop a formal partnership vetting process, including ethical guidelines and mission alignment assessments. Maintain transparency in agreements and ensure periodic reviews to assess the impact of corporate involvement. Uphold the independence of AAS's advocacy efforts.

6.1.5. Youth Engagement Model

Outcome: Strengthens leadership development and civic engagement among AAPI youth, cultivating the next generation of advocates.

Risk Analysis: A model overly focused on college campuses risks excluding non-college youth or those from underserved communities, reducing equitable access.

Mitigation: Supplement collegiate outreach with partnerships across high schools, community centers, and vocational programs. Provide mentorship opportunities to engage a broader spectrum of AAPI youth.

Recommendation: Expand engagement beyond college campuses by establishing partnerships with high schools, community centers, and vocational training programs. Develop mentorship initiatives to connect students with AAS leaders, ensuring broader youth participation in AAPI advocacy.

6.1.6. Annual Impact Report + Advocacy Framework

Outcome: Enhances accountability and visibility, boosting credibility with funders and supporters while informing advocacy strategies.

Risk Analysis: Developing robust reporting and evaluation systems may strain limited resources, leading to ineffective implementation and stakeholder dissatisfaction if not done strategically.

Mitigation: Begin with a streamlined, practical reporting framework that engages stakeholders in defining success metrics. Expand the scope incrementally as resources grow, ensuring sustainable, inclusive practices.

Recommendation: Implement practical and scalable data collection methodologies. Involve stakeholders in designing evaluation metrics to ensure relevance and accessibility. Start with a streamlined report focusing on key impact areas, then expand as capacity grows.

7. Next Steps and Additional Research

Based on the findings of this Capstone research, the following can serve as next steps to guide Asians Are Strong in strategically scaling its operations and securing financial sustainability while deepening its community impact. These steps reflect the organization's ongoing work, events, and partnerships and align with the six core recommendations.

AAS should prioritize capacity-building for fundraising and partnership cultivation. This can be achieved by formalizing its fundraising strategy through the development of sponsorship packages, grant writing templates, and pitch materials that highlight AAS's impactful events, such as the Asian Women Are Strong annual gathering, the World of Dumplings festival, and the AAS Heritage 5K. These events serve as dynamic opportunities to engage prospective sponsors and funders. Additionally, AAS should activate its Advisory Board and broader network to help build relationships with corporate sponsors, philanthropic institutions, and government entities, particularly those in sectors like tech, finance, and media that emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion. Exploring diversified funding streams, including collaborative grants, crowdfunding, and a recurring membership or donation program, will also strengthen financial sustainability.

An iterative learning and feedback system should be established to ensure continued relevance and community-centered responsiveness. This can include implementing post-event surveys, focus groups, and leveraging social media and attendance metrics to gather insights from attendees, partners, and volunteers. Regular stakeholder convenings and community listening sessions will allow AAS to realign its programming with evolving needs. Pilot initiatives, such as regional events or virtual forums, could serve as experimental spaces for innovation before broader implementation.

AAS should formalize and expand its approach to data collection, evaluation, and storytelling. Producing an annual impact report with accessible data visualizations, community success stories, and multilingual content will enhance transparency and drive stakeholder engagement. Public storytelling campaigns, data walks, and white papers could be used to translate grassroots voices into actionable policy insights. Participatory methods, such as interactive exhibitions and community meetings, should continue to play a role in presenting findings and co-creating solutions with the public. Additionally, the analysis of YouTube video recordings from listening and discussion sessions during the Asian Women Are Strong (AWAS) 2025 event revealed powerful, unfiltered narratives from AAPI women leaders and community members. These recordings offer a rich qualitative data source that AAS can leverage to identify recurring themes, amplify underrepresented voices, and guide programming priorities. By integrating these insights into future storytelling campaigns and impact reports, AAS can deepen public understanding of community needs while affirming its role as a trusted convener and catalyst for change.

In addition, AAS should continue building and maintaining long-term, values-aligned partnerships. To achieve this, it is crucial to establish clear criteria for vetting and stewarding partners, such as mission alignment, equity practices, and community trust. Strengthening

relationships with grassroots organizations, educational institutions, and cultural groups will enhance programmatic diversity and regional relevance. Ongoing communication, co-planning, and shared evaluation processes will ensure that partnerships remain productive and mutually beneficial over time.

AAS should continue laying the groundwork for its long-term vision of establishing a permanent community center in San Francisco. This space would serve as a cultural and organizing hub for the AAPI community, hosting events, workshops, advocacy efforts, and wellness services. The realization of this vision will require continued fundraising, infrastructure development, and alignment with long-term partners like RAMS, who bring complementary strengths and community trust. This center would solidify AAS's role as a national leader in AAPI empowerment and serve as a replicable model for similar organizations across the country.

Lastly, AAS must leverage its three flagship events (the Asian Women Are Strong gathering, the World of Dumplings festival, and the AAS Heritage 5K) as key touchpoints for visibility, engagement, and fundraising. These events offer essential opportunities to build momentum, strengthen partnerships, and demonstrate impact. Event dates should be prominently featured in organizational communications to generate year-round interest. These events can also serve as data collection sites and vehicles for activating new participants, community partners, and volunteers and sponsors.

An example of this strategy is AAS's ongoing partnership with Richmond Area Multi Services Inc. (RAMS), which will co-host the upcoming Heritage 5K Marathon + Wellness Event on May 10, 2025. This collaboration exemplifies effective partner stewardship, with regular meetings held between AAS and RAMS leadership to coordinate logistics, ensure mission alignment, and integrate wellness and mental health programming into the event. The collaboration has also facilitated a deeper learning process, as case studies from these meetings were analyzed to identify best practices in fundraising, community mobilization, and policy navigation. The research included a review of local, state, and federal policy frameworks that influence nonprofit advocacy, as well as philanthropic reports that illuminate trends and funding gaps specific to AAPI communities.

Looking forward, future research should explore how AAS's community-centered and event-based organizing model can scale nationally while preserving local relevance. Additional research could focus on barriers to public resource access for AAPI communities, effective strategies for youth and intergenerational engagement, and the long-term policy outcomes of cultural organizing. Evaluating the effectiveness of community-based funding models and digital engagement strategies, such as webinars, digital storytelling, and mobile platforms, will provide critical insights for future scalability and impact.

8. Conclusion

This Capstone project was designed to address the key research question: "How can Asians Are Strong (AAS) scale its operations and secure financial sustainability while maintaining its mission and impact?" The findings from this research provide actionable insights that will help AAS grow while staying deeply rooted in its core values of community empowerment and advocacy for AAPI communities.

The research highlighted that AAS's three core pillars (Safety Resources, Community Events, and Education) are central to its mission and offer a solid foundation for scaling its operations. Through its safety resources, AAS provides vital tools for community protection and empowerment. Its community events mobilize grassroots action, while its educational initiatives foster cultural awareness and build long-term solidarity. These pillars not only define AAS's approach but also serve as the cornerstones of its future growth.

The findings indicate that in order for AAS to scale effectively, it must prioritize strategic capacity-building, particularly in fundraising and partnership development. By formalizing its fundraising strategy, through the creation of sponsorship packages, grant templates, and pitch material, AAS can attract diverse funding sources. Strengthening relationships with philanthropic organizations, government entities, and corporate sponsors, particularly in sectors like tech, finance, and media, will diversify its income streams and ensure long-term sustainability. Expanding its funding model to include grants, crowdfunding, and recurring donation programs will further strengthen AAS's financial base while maintaining its mission-driven work.

Additionally, the research emphasizes the importance of formalizing feedback and learning mechanisms to ensure that AAS's programming remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the AAPI community. By implementing post-event surveys, focus groups, and regular community listening sessions, AAS can better understand the evolving needs of its stakeholders and fine-tune its activities accordingly. This will allow the organization to remain adaptable, scalable, and deeply connected to the communities it serves.

Furthermore, AAS's flagship events represent crucial touchpoints for visibility, engagement, and fundraising. By strategically leveraging these events, AAS can build momentum, showcase its impact, and strengthen partnerships with sponsors and collaborators. These events also offer a valuable platform for data collection, enabling AAS to track the effectiveness of its programming and deepen its relationships with supporters.

Looking forward, AAS should continue to build and maintain long-term, values-aligned partnerships with grassroots organizations, educational institutions, and cultural groups. Strengthening these relationships will not only help AAS maintain its community-centered approach but also expand its regional relevance and programmatic diversity.

The long-term vision of establishing a permanent community center in San Francisco remains central to AAS's strategy for deepening its impact. This center would serve as a cultural and organizing hub for the AAPI community, offering a space for events, workshops, advocacy, and wellness services. The realization of this vision will require sustained fundraising, strategic partnerships, and infrastructure development.

In conclusion, this Capstone project has provided clear pathways for Asians Are Strong to scale its operations, secure financial sustainability, and continue making a meaningful impact on AAPI communities. By aligning its growth strategies with its core pillars of Community Events, Safety Resources, and Education, AAS is positioned to remain true to its mission while expanding its reach and influence. The recommendations offered in this study provide a comprehensive roadmap to ensure that AAS's future growth is sustainable, equitable, and impactful, continuing to provide a voice and platform for AAPI communities for years to come.

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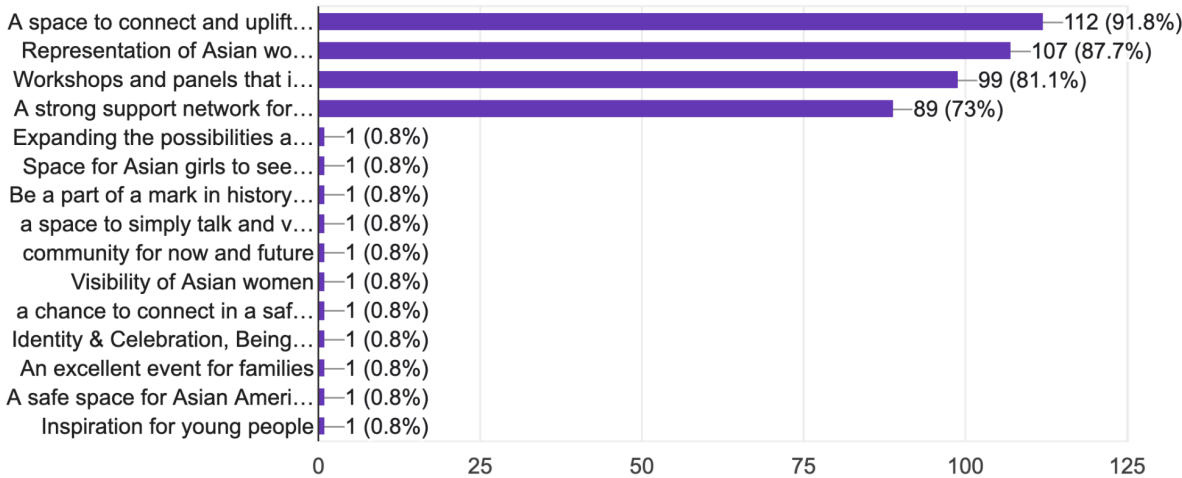
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10. Citations:

10.1 General Public Survey Data - AWAS 2025 (124 Participants Surveyed - Anonymous):

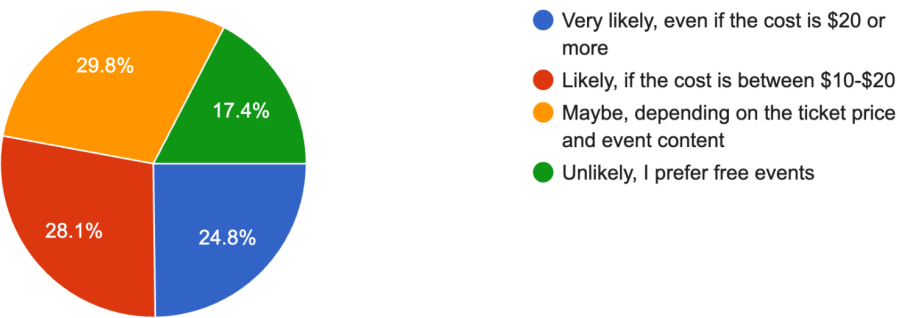
If the Asian Women Are Strong event was no longer available, what do you think our community would lose? (Select all that apply)

122 responses



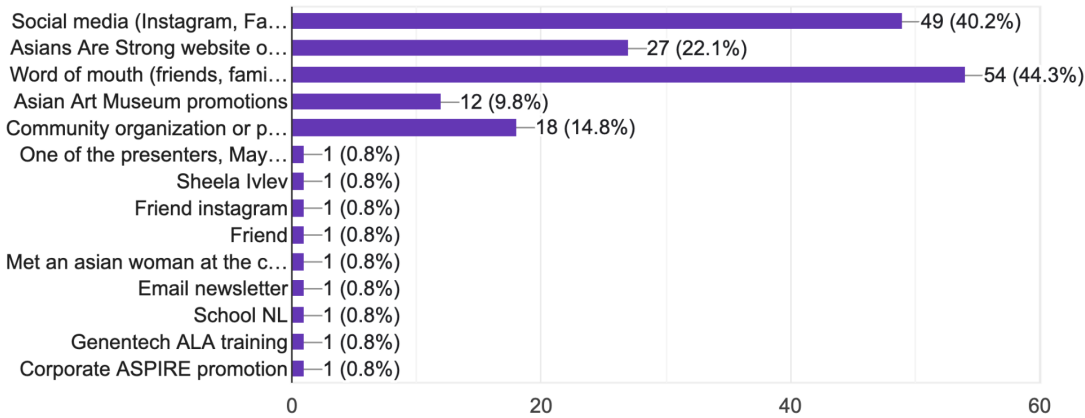
If future Asians Are Strong events required an entry fee, how likely would you be to attend?

121 responses



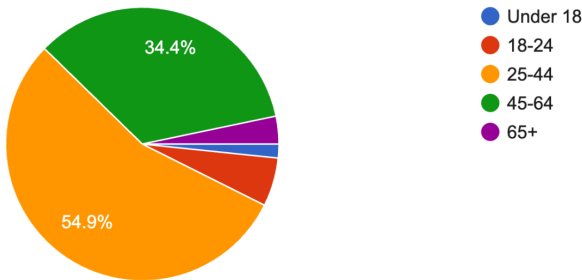
How did you hear about this event? (Select all that apply)

122 responses



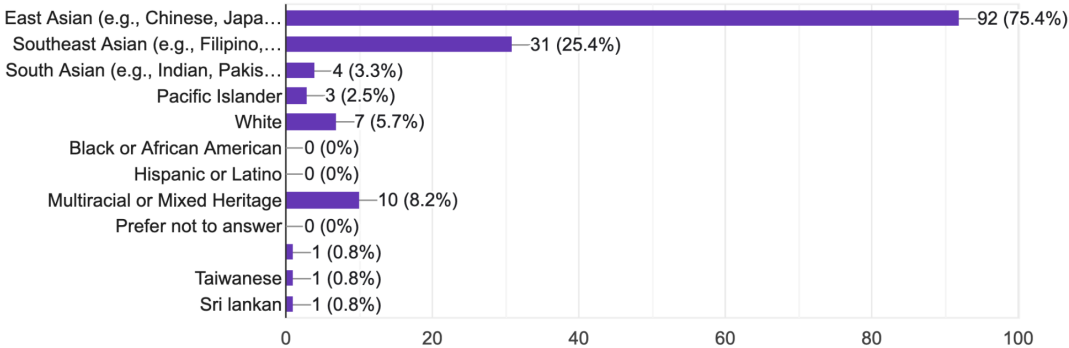
What is your age group?

122 responses



How do you identify in terms of race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

122 responses



General Public Event Survey Questions (Event Participants)

***Please contact author for detailed open-ended responses**

1. How well did this event align with the mission of Asians Are Strong to uplift the Asian community, especially women?

(1 = Not at all, 5 = Extremely well)

☐1☐2☐3☐4☐5

(Optional) What aspect of the event resonated with you the most?

2. "If AWAS were no longer here, what do you think our community would lose? (Select all that apply)"

A space to connect and uplift Asian women

Representation of Asian women's voices and leadership

Workshops and panels that inspire and educate

A strong support network for advocacy and mentorship

Other (please specify)

3. If future Asians Are Strong events required an entry fee, how likely would you be to attend?

☐ Very likely, even if the cost is \$20 or more

☐ Likely, if the cost is between \$10-\$20

☐ Maybe, depending on the ticket price and event content

☐ Unlikely, I prefer free events

4. Would you be interested in supporting Asians Are Strong in any of the following ways? (Select all that apply)

☐ Donating to support future events and programs

☐ Volunteering to help organize or run events

☐ Spreading the word and encouraging others to join

☐ Other (please specify): _____

☐ I'm not interested at this time

If you'd like to be involved, please share your email for follow-up opportunities:

Email: _____

5. How did you hear about this event? (Select all that apply)

☐ Social media (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

☐ Asians Are Strong website or email newsletter

☐ Word of mouth (friends, family, colleagues)

☐ Asian Art Museum promotions

☐ Community organization or partner

☐ Other (please specify): _____

6. What is your age group?

☐ Under 18

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-44

☐ 45-64

☐ 65+

7. How do you identify in terms of race/ethnicity? (*Check all that apply*)

☐ East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)

☐ Southeast Asian (e.g., Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai)

☐ South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)

☐ Pacific Islander

☐ White

☐ Black or African American

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ Multiracial or Mixed Heritage

☐ Other (please specify): _____

☐ Prefer not to answer

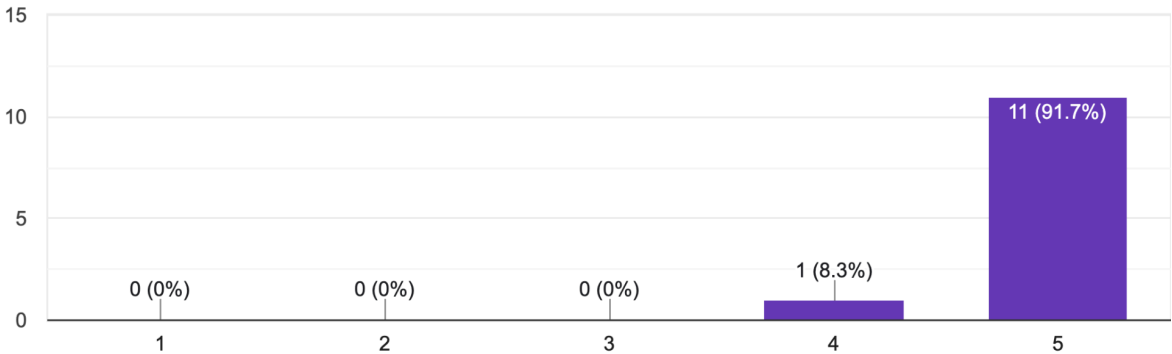
8. Do you have any suggestions for improving this event or future initiatives by Asians Are Strong? _____

Thank you for your time! Your insights help us continue building a strong and empowered community.

10.2 Event Partners Survey Data - AWAS 2025 (12 Participants Surveyed - Anonymous)

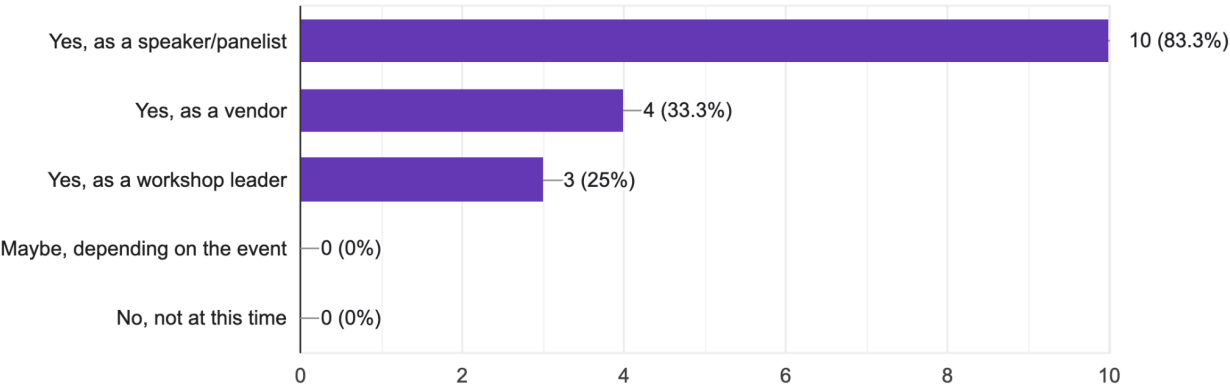
How well did this event support the mission of Asians Are Strong to uplift the Asian community?

12 responses

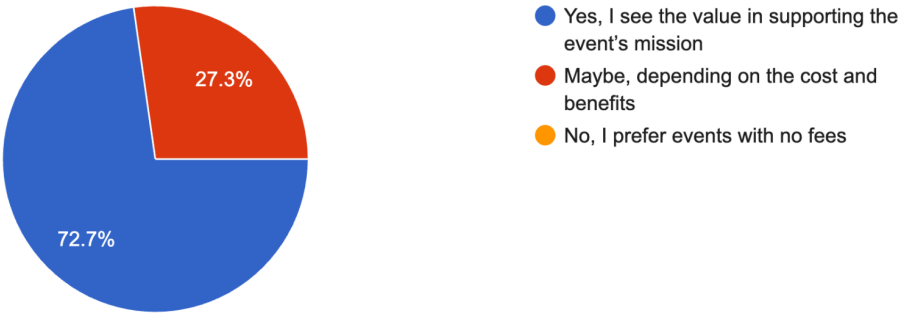


What was your role at the event? Would you participate again in a future Asians Are Strong event?
(Select all that apply)

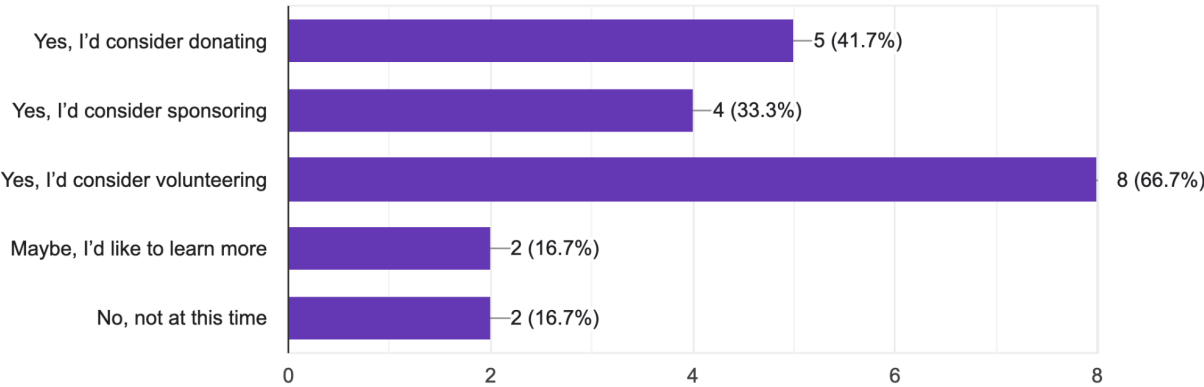
12 responses



To help sustain and grow future Asians Are Strong events, we may explore participation models that include vendor fees or other contributions. Would...uch a model if vendor fees ranged from \$50–\$150?
11 responses

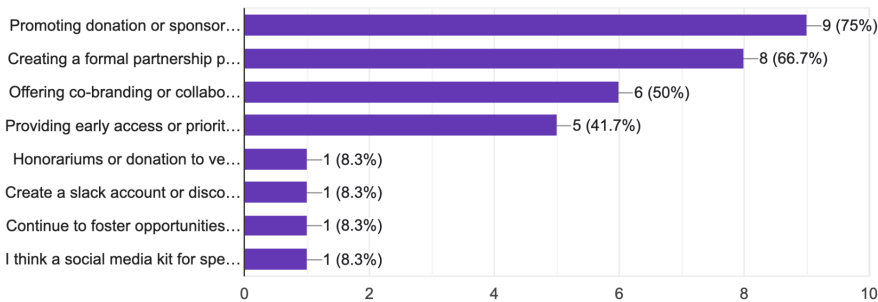


Would you consider donating, sponsoring, or volunteering for future Asians Are Strong initiatives?
(Select all that apply)
12 responses



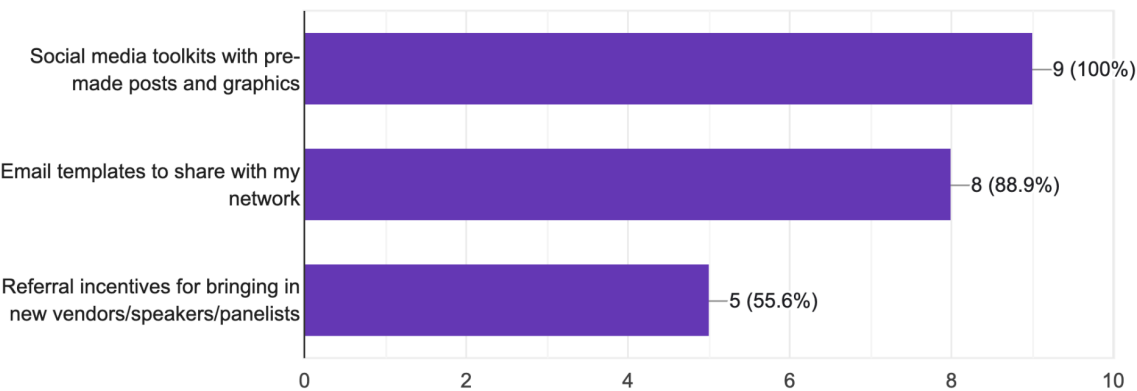
How can Asians Are Strong better engage vendors, speakers, panelists, and workshop leaders to support future events? (Select all that apply)

12 responses



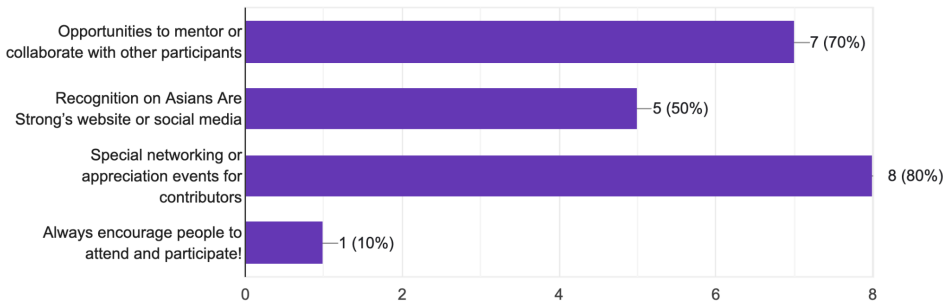
Would you be interested in helping spread the word about future Asians Are Strong events? If so, what kind of support would you need? (Select all that apply)

9 responses



What would encourage you to contribute to Asians Are Strong beyond participating in events? (Select all that apply)

10 responses



(Vendor/Speaker/Panelist/Workshop Leader) Event Partner Feedback Survey Questions

***Please contact author for detailed open-ended responses**

1. How would you rate your overall experience as a vendor/speaker/panelist/workshop leader at this event?
- ☐ Excellent
 - ☐ Good
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Needs improvement
 - ☐ Poor

(Optional) What aspects of the event stood out to you?

2. How well did this event support the mission of Asians Are Strong to uplift the Asian community?
- ☐ Extremely well
 - ☐ Very well
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Not much
 - ☐ Not at all
3. What was your role at the event? Would you participate again in a future Asians Are Strong event? *(Select all that apply)*
- ☐ Yes, as a speaker/panelist
 - ☐ Yes, as a vendor
 - ☐ Yes, as a workshop leader
 - ☐ Maybe, depending on the event
 - ☐ No, not at this time

Future Participation & Sustainability

4. To help sustain and grow future Asians Are Strong events, we may explore participation models that include vendor fees or other contributions. Would you still consider joining a future event under such a model if vendor fees ranged from \$50–\$150?
- ☐ Yes, I see the value in supporting the event's mission
 - ☐ Maybe, depending on the cost and benefits
 - ☐ No, I prefer events with no fees
5. What improvements or resources could have better supported you in your role at this event? Do you have any suggestions for enhancing the overall event experience?
-

6. Would you consider donating, sponsoring, or volunteering for future Asians Are Strong initiatives? *(Select all that apply)*
- ☐ Yes, I'd consider donating
 - ☐ Yes, I'd consider sponsoring
 - ☐ Yes, I'd consider volunteering

☐ Maybe, I'd like to learn more

☐ No, not at this time

(If you selected "Yes" or "Maybe," please provide your email so we can follow up with you:)

Community Engagement & Collaboration

7. How can Asians Are Strong better engage vendors, speakers, panelists, and workshop leaders to support future events? *(Select all that apply)*

☐ Promoting donation or sponsorship opportunities tailored to participants

☐ Creating a formal partnership program for returning participants

☐ Offering co-branding or collaborative marketing opportunities

☐ Providing early access or priority placement for repeat contributors

☐ Other: _____

8. Would you be interested in helping spread the word about future Asians Are Strong events? If so, what kind of support would you need? *(Select all that apply)*

☐ Social media toolkits with pre-made posts and graphics

☐ Email templates to share with my network

☐ Referral incentives for bringing in new vendors/speakers/panelists

☐ Other: _____

9. What would encourage you to contribute to Asians Are Strong beyond participating in events? *(Select all that apply)*

☐ Opportunities to mentor or collaborate with other participants

☐ Recognition on Asians Are Strong's website or social media

☐ Special networking or appreciation events for contributors

☐ Other: _____

10. Do you have any connections to potential sponsors, donors, or partners who may be interested in supporting future events?

Thank you for your valuable contributions! Your feedback helps us continue creating impactful experiences.

10.3 Participatory Research (AWAS 2025 a-g):

*Please contact author for detailed open-ended responses in the recordings

Public Listening and Discussion Sessions/Forums at AWAS 2025:

- a. **Asians Are Strong. (2025, March 8). *A Tiger Mom and Her Cub: Modern Parenting for Asian Women and Daughters* [Video]. YouTube.**

https://youtu.be/2FZBk9lCVrI?si=L_d00i2KgrVOokyl

Deborah Liu - Former CEO, Ancestry

Bethany Liu - Tiger Cub

Moderated by Annie Tsai, Leadership Board *Moms in Tech*, COO - Interact

“Asian mothers are often labeled as “Tiger Moms,” but what does that really mean? Is it about strict discipline, high expectations, or something deeper—unwavering love, resilience, and the drive to see our children thrive? In this intimate fireside chat, Deborah Liu, CEO of Ancestry, and her daughter explore the evolving dynamics of Asian parenting, ambition, and empowerment across generations. How do we raise strong, confident children while breaking free from outdated stereotypes? How do we balance ambition with empathy—not just for our kids but for ourselves as parents? This heartfelt conversation will challenge assumptions, celebrate cultural strengths, and offer a fresh perspective on what it truly means to parent with Main Character Energy. Because being a Tiger Mom isn’t about control—it’s about raising a generation that knows their worth, embraces their heritage, and owns their power.”

- b. **Asians Are Strong. (2025, March 8). *New Trends in Mental Health* [Video]. YouTube.**

<https://youtu.be/LA2UHpUcaso?si=LvlpL4Wmpwi3-ftf>

Carrie Zhang - Founder, Asian Mental Health Project

Angela Tang - RAMS, Executive Director

Amna Jaffer - Certified Educator - Psychodrama

Moderated by Yeri Shon, Associate Director, KCCEB

“Mental health is evolving beyond just coping—it’s about thriving and taking ownership of well-being. As awareness grows, new approaches are reshaping how we care for ourselves and our communities. Join experts as they share insights on the shifting landscape of mental health and what it means for the future. Because Main Character Energy means prioritizing yourself and leading the way to a healthier, more empowered life.”

- c. **Asians Are Strong. (2025, March 8). *Conquering Your Past: Intergenerational Healing (Overcoming Intergenerational Trauma)* [Video]. YouTube.**

<https://youtu.be/EKyJEWZpkdI?si=AQnVEgslsGgHVP4T>

Kyoung Mi Choi - Author of *The Child Left Behind the Bushes: A Daughter’s Healing Journey of Intergenerational Trauma*

Ulash Thakore-Dunlap - Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Mental Health Specialist, California Judges Association

Soo Jin Lee - Author of *Where I Belong: Healing Trauma and Embracing Asian American Identity*

Ellie Yang Camp - Author of *Louder Than The Lies*

Moderated by Dr. Helen Hsu - Author of The Healing Trauma Workbook for Asian Americans

"We are shaped by the generations before us—their resilience, sacrifices, and unspoken struggles. But healing is not just about looking back; it's about reclaiming our stories and choosing how we move forward. This panel brings together experts in mental health, counseling, and storytelling to explore the power of intergenerational healing. Through personal experiences and professional insights, we'll discuss how to break cycles, nurture self-compassion, and embrace the strength of our roots while forging our own paths. Because true Main Character Energy means honoring the past while stepping into the future with clarity, confidence, and purpose."

d. Asians Are Strong. (2025, March 8). Own Your Narrative: The Power of Telling Your Story [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/JXuiTztO2p0?si=-BkKF8Tjj2MEOWYj>

Gayle Romasanta - Executive Director, Larry the Musical

Tamyln Tomita - Actress & Activist

Abigail Wen - NYT Bestselling Author, Loveboat, Taipei Film Producer

Villy Wang - BAYCAT, Founder, TED Speaker

Moderated by May Lee, Award Winning Journalist, Founder, Lotus Media House, Professor

"This panel explores the transformative impact of personal narratives—how sharing our experiences can empower, inspire, and drive change. Through storytelling, Asian women can reclaim their voices, challenge stereotypes, and shape the narrative of their own identities. This panel brings together storytellers, writers, and creators who have harnessed the power of their stories to build community, foster understanding, and carve out space in industries where representation matters. Whether through literature, film, or advocacy, their journeys highlight how owning and telling your story can be a catalyst for both personal and collective empowerment."

e. Asians Are Strong. (2025, March 8). Overcoming Imposter Syndrome [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/0KdB-nlDscI?si=fXk345j20LpH0VeH>

Victoria Fu - Co-CEO, Chemist Confessions

Gloria Lu - Co-CEO, Chemist Confessions

Ashlyn So - 16 year old Fashion Designer, NY & Paris Fashion Week

Anh Phoong - CEO, Phoong Law

"Main character energy means stepping fully into your expertise and claiming your space—without waiting for permission. This panel brings together bold entrepreneurs and business leaders who have built thriving brands in law, skincare science, and consumer goods. They'll share how they navigated challenges, silenced external doubt, and embraced their success on their own terms. Whether you've faced imposter syndrome or never questioned your worth, this conversation will inspire you to lead with confidence, take up space, and own your power."

- f. **Asians Are Strong. (2025, March 8). *Breakthrough Performance: Thriving as Asian Women at Work* [Video]. YouTube.**

https://youtu.be/sgBGELvDHEA?si=_YYFwEdeNESPa6Zb

Edith Yeung - General Partner, Race Capital, Commentator for Bloomberg, BBC, CNBC, and the Wall Street Journal

Noriko Honda Chen - Partner, Capital Group

Belinda Li - Senior Director, Corporate Engineering, Forbes 40 under 40

Divya Shok - Former COO, Salesforce AI, National Board Member, ASEI

Moderated by Zeien Cheung, Co-Founder, Asians Are Strong

“Asian women in male-dominated industries often face unique cultural and societal expectations that shape how we navigate leadership, visibility, and success. This panel will dive into the unspoken challenges—like balancing humility with self-advocacy, overcoming stereotypes, and finding our voice in spaces where we are underrepresented. Through shared experiences and real strategies, we’ll explore how to embrace our identity, push past cultural barriers, and thrive while staying true to ourselves.”

- g. **Asians Are Strong. (2025, March 8). *Fireside Chat with Amanda Ngoc Nguyen: Saving Five* [Video]. YouTube.**

<https://youtu.be/YmOGITGluig?si=ziuG-ntABY9BKqi7>

Amanda Ngoc Nguyen - Civil Rights, Astronaut, 2022 TIME Woman of the Year, 2019 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee

Gia Vang - Journalist, NBC Bay Area, Emmy Award Winner, Co-founder, The Very Asian Foundation

“Award-winning journalist, Gia Vang, has an inspiring and thought-provoking interview with Amanda Ngoc Nguyen- Astronaut, Author, Activist, 2022 TIME Woman of the Year, and 2019 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee at this year’s Asian Women Are Strong Summit.”