The twin functions of the AAA Committee on Public Policy are to enhance the effectiveness of individual anthropologists and the AAA on public policy issues and to develop policy expertise and nurture public policy debates within the AAA.

**Function**
In 1988 the AAA established the Department of Government Relations to assist the AAA in dealing with government agencies and Congress. In 1997 the AAA established a Public Policy Exploratory Committee to investigate ways in which our professional association could develop its capabilities to be more effective in the public policy domain. The result of this Committee's work was the formal establishment of the AAA Committee on Public Policy (COPP) in 1998. The COPP has both an internal and external mission. The Committee's internal mission is to develop public policy expertise and enhance public policy debate among anthropologists within the AAA. The Committee's external mission is to enhance the effectiveness of AAA and anthropologists in working with policy makers and other organizations, in order to strengthen the public profile of the AAA and anthropology.

**Links to AAA Long-Range Plan**

The work of the COPP is directly linked to Objective II of the AAA's Long-Range Plan: "The AAA will foster the discussion and dissemination of research on critical social issues to policy makers and relevant public in the society at large." Corollary work in response to Objective II also responds to the LRP objective of promoting and attracting practicing anthropologists to the AAA and initiatives for their professional development.

**Responsibilities**

Specific COPP responsibilities are: 1) developing and operationalizing a public policy center for anthropologists and related disciplines; 2) fostering and administering public policy forums at the AAA annual meetings; 3) maintaining a standing public policy column in the Anthropology Newsletter; 4)
maintaining a public policy page as part of the AAA website; and 5) fostering collaborations and opportunities for individual anthropologists and the AAA in policy making.

**Public Policy Center:** The most active and notable work over the last five years has been the development of a public policy center to be housed at an existing academic institution in the Washington, D.C. area. The center's mission is to increase the impact and visibility of anthropologists in public policy. The center will be a home for policy-oriented activities that involve a cross-section of anthropologists, interdisciplinary scholars, policy actors, grassroots representatives, and applied, practicing, and academic anthropologists. The center serves multiple AAA goals and objectives to include bringing anthropological knowledge and insights to bear on pressing policy issues, and to make policy skills, resources, and networks more widely available to anthropologists.

A Center development plan was developed over the past five years with considerable input from AAA leadership, LRPC, sections, and membership. The AAA Executive Committee approved the AAA's plan (the entire plan is available upon request) at its meeting in December, 2004. The plan is now at the early implementation stage that consists primarily of developing an RFP for several institutions in the Washington, D.C. area who have already expressed an interest in being a host. Funding for the Center will come from seed money from the AAA, base support from the host institution, and activity grants written through the center. The center will increasingly take responsibility for generating its own funding through direct expenses on grants and overhead but it does require professional association seed money, the initial stage of which has been approved by the AAA Executive Committee.

**Public Policy Forums:** The AAA COPP continues to organize, review, and administer public policy forums at the AAA Annual meetings. The purpose of these forums is decidedly different than normal academic sessions in bringing anthropologists and other scholars together with those working in policy arenas to focus on pressing public policy matters. The structures of forums also differ in being premised on policy driven dialogue and discussion rather than formal presentation. Forum topics have included: assaults on teaching evolution, federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind, health disparities, bioterrorism, marine protected areas, AIDS, transnational migration, agricultural industrialization, violence in the Mideast, and Affirmative Action, to name but a few.

The COPP is responsible for helping to generate these forums,
reviewing proposals, and ensuring they serve their function as policy forums such that they do not replicate standard academic sessions. The forums have been quite successful, with solid attendance and ongoing interest from sections and membership. The most significant challenge has been the need for follow-up mechanisms to continue the policy-related direction generated by the forums. Currently there is no formal mechanism within the AAA to sustain the outcomes of these sessions in the public policy arena. The Public Policy Center is slated to fill this void.

*Public Policy Column in the Anthropology Newsletter.* The AAA COPP assigns one member of the committee to serve as a gatekeeper and editor for a standing monthly public policy column in the AN. The column has functioned fairly well, with many columns written by the organizers of policy forums. This allows the results of the public policy forums to generate more awareness and interest within AAA membership and fuels collaboration and dialogue on pressing policy matters.

*Public Policy Page on AAA Website.* The AAA COPP has a page on the AAA website dedicated to COPP work and public policy matters. However, this page is woefully out-dated and under-utilized. While the COPP has repeatedly discussed the need to review and maintain and up-date their web page, the work simply has not gotten done. This is primarily the result of not having dedicated resources to support someone at AAA to do the necessary website administration. The COPP recommends that the AAA provide support to Paul Nuti to review, revise and provide ongoing support for the AAA COPP web page. This web page is often our front line connection to the public and AAA members on policy matters and deserves ongoing support. Moreover, additional opportunities exist for website collaboration with the newly formed AAA Interest Group on the Anthropology of Public Policy.

*Fostering Opportunities for Training and Collaboration.* The Public Policy Center was originally designed and planned with the goal of a collaborative arrangement with the Society for Applied Anthropology. To that end, considerable effort over a three-year period was invested in working with the SfAA's Policy Committee, Executive Board, leadership, and membership. Unfortunately, in August of 2004 the SfAA Executive declined a final proposal for a collaborative venture with the AAA citing the lack of financial resources to support the start-up costs.

Nonetheless, a clear function of the Policy Center will be to provide training and educational opportunities for traditional and applied
anthropologists in the policy arena. An important piece of feedback provided by AAA members, section leaders, and NAPA included the need to increase the opportunities for anthropologists at all levels to be exposed to policy processes. Consequently, this has become an important part of the Center's developing function to be incorporated in the RFP issued to interested host institutions.

In addition, the COPP fosters collaboration with other disciplines and non-academics through the Public Policy Forums at the AAA Annual meetings. The COPP has also served as a link to foster policy related sessions at the annual meetings of the AAAS.

**Future Work and Needed Resources**

**PUBLIC POLICY CENTER:** The COPP will continue its work to fully realize the Public Policy Center. A truncated timeline for Center development is provided below. Resources of approximately $5,000 per year are likely necessary to cover start-up costs for two years beyond the current year. These resources are contingent on yearly progress reports. A fully detailed short and long-term budget is provided in the full proposal. It is critical at this stage of development that the AAA insures that both human and organizational resources are provided.

**Year 1:**

Nov.- March 2005 Prepare and send out RFP for host institutions
April-June. 2005 (end) Return of proposals June - Sept. 2005
Work with host institution to finalize Center plans and begin implementation (tax status, governance, by-laws, etc.)
In keeping with governance structure, professional associations appoint representatives to governing board and program committee

**Year Two:**

Sept. 2005 Center begins operations Nov. 2005 Supporting organizations review progress to date and year 2 budget request.
Report to LRPC and AAA Executive Committee.

Sept. 2005-Aug. 2006 Center activities:
(1) Plan and obtain funds for large scale anthropology and environment consultation;
(2) Begin plans for second focus area;
(3) Have directory of anthropologists and related people with policy expertise on-line;
(4) Begin plans for archive/record of anthropology and policy
products/experiences

COPP POLICY WEB PAGE: At least a half-time staff person should be allocated to assist Paul Nuti in reviewing, up-dating, and maintaining the AAA Policy Website. Past experience shows that COPP members cannot operate the website and existing staffing within AAA does not allow for adequate and timely maintenance. Reviews of comparable policy web pages among our sister disciplines reveals anthropology's acute need to ensure we are providing members and the public with an ongoing web-based face for its public policy efforts.

DEVELOPING PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING POLICY PRIORITIES: Paul Nuti, Director of External, International & Government Relations, joined the AAA COPP in 2004 and provided several insightful comments on how the Committee and the organization as a whole consider developing greater attention to public policy matters. An important question concerns identifying and articulating a clear and inclusive process by which both the COPP and the AAA as a whole can identify and prioritize public policy issues. An important lesson of developing the Public Policy Center over the past five years is that there is currently no identifiable or widely recognized process in the AAA for ground-up member driven initiatives, whether they are policy related or otherwise.

RESOURCES: The COPP is not given actual budgetary figures by the AAA. Rather the process involves the COPP Chair making requests for financial support for sets of activities, e.g., yearly meeting expenses. This is not followed up by either a direct response from the AAA or an actual budget from which the Committee can work. Rather, there looms some sort of allocated pot of money for COPP work, but the COPP itself never receives a final itemized budget nor gets account balance reports. This should be changed so the COPP feels more ownership and involvement over its budget and related activities.