



# RiSWP

RISING SMART WATER  
PROFESSIONALS

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2021-2025**

**September 2021**

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# 1 Introduction

The Smart Water Networks Forum (SWAN) has grown exponentially over the past 10 years of its existence, averaging consistent growth every year since the previous Strategic Plan was launched in 2016. With this scaling, SWAN recognises the importance of improving member retention rates, diversifying their Member types, further strengthening their value proposition to potential members, identifying and partnering with complementary organisations in the smart water space, and embracing a data and digitally-driven agenda to lead us towards the new decade.

Fostering a strong network of young professionals to establish trust, loyalty, and a long term engagement within the SWAN network plays a fundamental role in supporting these objectives. The Rising Smart Water Professionals (RiSWP), a volunteer-based affiliate of the Global SWAN Forum, is excited to support SWAN's mission and goals while creating clear and relevant pathways for young professionals to enter the smart water sector and advance their careers.

Since 2018, RiSWP has grown into a recognised brand within the smart water sector, with regular events and a strong online presence. The main gathering space for RiSWP is the LinkedIn group, which has grown five fold since 2018. To date, the RiSWP events have attracted hundreds of attendees from around the world during live events, and over one thousand online views of recorded events.



Locations of RiSWP online event attendees in 2020

## 1.1. CONTEXT OF STRATEGY

Within today's new normal, more and more organisations are focusing their efforts on digital transformation. While SWAN has maintained a strong presence for the past decade, it is now optimal timing to embrace a digital transformation both internally and externally to best serve SWAN's existing members, recruit new ones, and to continue leading the smart water and wastewater sector.

Given the overarching new SWAN global strategy and the strong growth of RiSWP, a clear Vision and Mission with Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans are required to ensure continued engagement with young professionals.

## 1.2 VMOSA MODEL

For the purpose of this version of the RiSWP Strategic Plan covering the years 2021-2025 (inclusive), the VMOSA model will be utilised to best convey the organisation's strategic Vision, Mission, Objectives, and later, once adopted, Strategies and Action Plans required to carry out the agreed upon objectives. The latter will be broken down into roles and

responsibilities, as well as any potential resources required.

## 2 Vision

The water sector faces growing global challenges and pressures. Climate change, population growth, ageing infrastructure and environmental issues make meeting society's demands harder than ever. Expectations for efficient and sustainable delivery continue to grow while workforce demographics change and institutional knowledge is lost to retirement. To achieve our goals for universal access to water and sanitation, the water sector must embrace new, digital ways of working.

As technological innovation continues to pervade new industries, it's imperative that applications in the water sector are prioritised. RiSWP, as an official affiliate of SWAN, is well positioned to play a leading role in identifying and forging those pathways for young professionals - those with the greatest potential for data-driven impact.

### 2.1 A smart water vision for the future:

*“Riversheds are intelligently managed from source to sea and nature-based solutions are used synergistically with grey infrastructure. Smart water communities leverage resource circularity and water sensitive design. Utilities are digitally enabled and, together with industries, fuel innovation for universal access to affordable and safe water and sanitation. In areas where centralised systems are not feasible, communities are inclusively designed with circular decentralised systems. All of these elements build towards universal access to safe and affordable water and sanitation for all.”*

Achieving this vision for a smart water future requires the further development of interdisciplinary skills to ensure that the solutions being built are fit for purpose.

For water networks to become “smart”, there is an urgent need to ensure that water professionals develop the necessary digital skills. This requires capacity development on data, systems thinking, and working in multi-disciplinary teams with experts from other areas of the Smart City Network.

By tapping into the potential of digital water, industry and utilities will harness digital tools for predictive maintenance as well as more efficient and environmentally friendly operations. Water professionals will need to be equipped with the requisite skills to own and drive the process of digitisation in the sector.

Integrating digital tools at the local level can support decentralisation (or decentralised approaches) which provides a huge opportunity, especially for emerging markets and growing communities. RiSWP can contribute to the digital transformation of their local communities in this decentralised framework.

## **2.2 A vision for RiSWP:**

“RiSWP is the leading global network for students and early career professionals passionate about smart water and wastewater to network, grow, learn, and share.”

## **3 Mission**

SWAN has made great strides to become the leading, global smart water and wastewater hub by bringing together leading international water utilities, solution providers, academics, investors, regulators, young professionals and other industry experts to accelerate the awareness and adoption of smart, data-driven solutions in water and wastewater networks worldwide. RiSWP aims to further support SWAN’s growth by designing programs that will reach a larger and younger global audience of changemakers that was previously untapped.

Within this context, RiSWP has developed the following mission:

### **3.1. MISSION STATEMENT**

“RiSWP aims to be the driving force for networking, knowledge sharing, and professional development to enable a smarter water sector by creating a future-ready workforce who can collectively tackle challenges and work towards a smart water future.”

Globally, we are at an inflection point of transformation, the degree to which has rarely been seen in human history. The vision for the future that RiSWP sketched out is a digitally transformed world and as part of this, there is a complete transformation in human interaction from the traditional top-down hierarchical structures to the far more powerful peer-to-peer network.

The main difference between hierarchies and networks is that hierarchies are designed to leverage the “power of one,” while networks naturally enable the “power of many.” That is why networks are so much more powerful and why the RiSWP Leadership Team, SWAN, RiSWP Ambassadors and the entire community are co-designing RiSWP to reflect this enabling environment. Together, the RiSWP community is creating the future we want to see and being the change we want to be.

## **4 Objectives & Strategies**

RiSWP’s objectives for 2021-2025 are based on the following **four pillars**, developed in collaboration with the global community of young professionals and in response to needs-based surveys:

1. A Governance Model that leverages collective intelligence to lead by example for the future of the smart water sector.
2. An Ambassador Programme to grow our community and amplify the diverse voices of RiSWP and smart water leaders around the world.
3. A Mentorship Programme to share advice from leading professionals in the smart water sector and be guided by lessons learned.
4. A Career Development Programme to support upskilling, reskilling, and professional development for the RiSWP community.

**Underpinning these pillars are two cross-cutting activities: networking and knowledge mobilisation.**

## **4.1. SMART+C MODEL**

The objectives outlined in section 4.2 below are based on the SMART+C Model, in which each objective is **specific, measurable, actionable, relevant** to the vision & mission, **timed** and **challenging**.

## **4.2 FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

RiSWP's five-year strategic objectives are guided by the four pillars briefly described above. RiSWP will strive to ensure gender, racial, ethnic, geographic and sectoral diversity, as well as balance inclusion of current SWAN members and prospective members, in all activities and engagements.

### **2021**

- RiSWP will have a flexible and lean governance structure to facilitate the transition of Leadership Teams and Ambassador roles and responsibilities, adopted by the community and supported by SWAN.
- RiSWP will be operating based on equity, diversity and inclusion principles in all of its activities.
- RiSWP will have clearly mapped user journeys to learn how to grow membership and reach more people.
- RiSWP Ambassadors will be self-sufficient local hubs, representing RiSWP and running regionally appropriate activities.
- RiSWP's League of Mentors series will be fully facilitated and coordinated by RiSWP Ambassadors.
- RiSWP's League of Mentors series will consistently have over 30 attendees during live events.
- RiSWP's career portal will feature a robust library of professional development resources relevant to skills required in the smart water sector.

### **2022**

- RiSWP community members will be integrated across the SWAN Alliances and represented at all SWAN events.
- RiSWP's membership value proposition will be clear and well communicated to all community members.
- RiSWP will have a diversified reach across the water sector, incorporating representation from WASH, Small Medium Enterprises, private and public sectors, etc.
- RiSWP Ambassadors will have successfully hosted at least one activity each.
- RiSWP's League of Mentors series will be recognised as a gold standard resource for young professionals to join, with potential mentors actively approaching the Leadership Team for involvement.
- RiSWP Ambassadors will be empowered to grow the League of Mentors series to meet current industry gaps.
- RiSWP will have 5 testimonials evidencing how its activities have helped individuals enter or transition into the smart water field.

## **2023**

- RiSWP's vision for the future of smart water will be the leading vision for the global sector.
- RiSWP will offer 1-1 mentoring opportunities for SWAN RiSWP members.
- RiSWP will host 3 smart water workshops facilitated by Subject Matter Experts.

## **2024**

- RiSWP reach will grow another fivefold via Ambassadors engaging at regional levels.
- RiSWP mentorship and career development activities will be aligned up as the go-to resource for the RiSWP community within a unified career hub.
- RiSWP will have 3 testimonials of smart water industry leaders recognising and acquiring talent from the RiSWP community.

## **2025**

- RiSWP will be the leading community for young professionals

working in smart water and the leading community for best practices in ways of working.

- RiSWP's Ambassador Programme will be a recognised sector wide privileged role.
- RiSWP's Ambassador Programme will be running autonomously, with minimal input needed from SWAN or the Leadership Team.