RESOURCE GUIDE OF INDUSTRY AND MARKET RESEARCH INITIATIVES

(Updated as of August 2021)

2008–Present

ABOUT

PURPOSE
We hope that this resource guide can increase your understanding and knowledge of the work of the Foundation and assist you in sharing this research to members and the community. The ASAE Research Foundation has a robust portfolio of past, ongoing, and planned research activities, with various accompanying research outputs. This guide was created to serve as a first reference for ASAE staff and volunteers to be able to broaden their knowledge of and speak to the breadth of the ASAE Research Foundation's research activities. Each section directs users to available resources, such as briefs, reports, books, and other research outputs when they want to develop a more in-depth understanding of specific areas of research.

STRUCTURE
The document is organized around content areas that mirror the setup of the Foundation website. Research projects are divided into the following categories:

- Association Impact
- Benchmarking Research
- Business Operations
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Governance
- Innovation
- Leadership
- Marketing and Communications

- Meetings and Events
- Membership
- Professional Development
- Research Methodologies
- Self-Assessments and Tools
- Technology
- Volunteerism

The table of contents lists each research project by category. In addition, there is a chronological list of research projects immediately following the table of contents. The research resource guide is updated by ASAE Research Foundation research staff on a biannual basis to reflect the progress of ongoing projects and the addition of recently launched projects.

Each entry lists the target audience for the research, and the survey sample. It includes a description of completed and/or planned phases of the research and lists key takeaways from each research output. Volunteers and staff can gain further insight by reading the full outputs summarized in each section.

Any questions that you may have about the guide or any of the research activities it describes can be directed to research@asaecenter.org.

Table of Contents: By Topic

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Hallmarks of the ASAE Research Foundation's Work

ASAE Research Foundation research supports association professionals' ability to shape better solutions, stronger organizations, and more productive and fulfilling careers—now and in the future. Our work embodies integrity, applicability, and innovation and focuses on three hallmarks:

EMPOWERING FORESIGHT
Our forward-looking research—anchored by ASAE ForesightWorks— gives professionals insights to navigate the future and build sustainable strategies. ASAE ForesightWorks is a key multi-year initiative in this hallmark by identifying drivers of change likely to affect associations and supporting association professionals in exercising foresight to lead their organizations. Current work emphasizes practical application.

DEFINING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
Our research into association management practices yields evidence-based benchmarks in operations, governance, volunteer management, and other areas that professionals can use to inform decisions and lead their organizations. ASAE Research Foundation Benchmarking plays a prominent role here, but other research helps to define effective practices as well. For example, the Foundation's ongoing governance research highlights effective board-selection practices in outputs such as Building a Better Board and Recruit the Right Board.

SUSTAINING ASSOCIATION VALUE
Our work continually explores and illuminates association value contributions and societal impact—enhancing and advancing associations' ability to deliver value to their industries, professions, and the broader world. An example of the *Sustaining Association Value* hallmark is the 2020 Impact Every Day (Centennial Research) Initiative. In 2021, current research underpinning this hallmark include the Societal Impact research and Associations as Catalyst: Industry-Focused Innovation.

Table of Contents: By Hallmark (alpha order)

Table of Contents: By Hallmark (alpha order)

Resource Guide of Industry and Market Research Initiatives

Each research study that follows is identified by its topic, timeline, and hallmark.

SAMPLE
- TOPIC: ABOUT ASSOCIATIONS
- 2017–PRESENT
- HALLMARK: SUSTAINING ASSOCIATION VALUE

ABOUT ASSOCIATIONS
2017–20
SUSTAINING ASSOCIATION VALUE

2020 Impact Every Day (Centennial Research) Project

Primary Audience — Association Professionals

Research Partners — Power of A / McKinley Advisors / Westat

Research Sample — Organizational Members / Individual Members / Nonmembers

Research Objectives

The research described and quantified the impact and unique positioning of associations in the broader society. This research tells a story about

- how associations make the lives of individuals in society better, stronger, smarter, and safer now and into the future.
- how associations have made an impact in the United States, and why other cultures may benefit from emulating the association management model.
- what is present in society today that was not present 100 years ago as a result of the influence of associations.
- how associations might best anticipate and prepare for future change.

The overarching objective is aligned with the four pillars of ASAE's *Power of A* advocacy campaign.

1. Strengthen the Economy
2. Strengthen Lives
3. Strengthen Jobs/Skills/Employment
4. Strengthen Structures, Systems, and Policies

The research centered on distinct topics indicated below, from varying perspectives (past, present, and future). These topics may be combined to better assess the topic and achieve the research goals.

Key Themes of the Research

Change Management	Education	Economy	Connection
How associations affect change	How associations contribute to professional development and enhance the knowledge and education of the American workforce	How associations impact and influence the American economy, and the value of that impact	How associations facilitate building relationships and communities of professionals, and demonstrate impact (or influence behavior and professional interaction) through various connections and partnerships
Membership & Engagement	**Workforce**	**Protection**	**Preparation for the Future**
How employers support membership and engagement of professionals in associations; and what economic value is placed on member engagement	How associations put America to work	How associations protect members of society (i.e., establishing standards, certification, accreditation)	How associations proactively address shifts in society

Resource Guide of Industry and Market Research Initiatives

Research Phases

Background: To celebrate ASAE's centennial (2020), the ASAE Research Foundation launched the study "Impact of Associations on Society: Evidence for Future Influence and Action" to capture the impact of associations in the broader society. The research promotes the value, impact, and contributions of associations to society in the past and explores opportunities for the future.

Impact Every Day, the title for the ASAE Research Foundation's centennial research initiative is a multi-year study that delivered evidence that supports the Power of A message: that society is better, safer, and smarter because of work that associations do. Moreover, the efforts of associations in several key areas are seen as important in the past and present. The study explored associations' contributions to education and workforce development, economic development, and safety and protection, as well as perspectives about where associations may provide value in the future.

Research Outputs

Serving as a call to action to association professionals, the case studies, interview highlights, and key survey data has been designed to share the stories of association impact captured by the research to bring to external stakeholders.

A complete collection of findings, including the case studies and the full data analysis are found here: The Vital Role of Associations in Society.

Key Findings

Key Highlights

- Associations are perceived as playing a critical and highly valued role in society. The research explored perceptions among thought leaders and a sample of association members and stakeholders, resulting in consistently positive responses. This theme was validated further through the case studies.
- Transformative thinking exists within associations, but not to the degree that it could. Study participants believe that transformative thinking occurs within associations at some level, with most acknowledging that associations serve as ideal venues for this type of thought.
- Industry and thought leaders believe associations should develop more innovative communication strategies, increase collaboration and partnerships across associations and sectors, and promote cross-cutting discussions around big topics of shared importance.
- Among associations that pursue high-impact projects, few formally recognize the role that evidence plays in helping them build stronger, more impactful initiatives. This is true in the early stages of the project, such as assessment or development, but also after the initiative has launched, where clear and measurable metrics are critical to quantifying efficacy and impact.
- Across the case studies, a few common factors emerged for high-impact initiatives. Many of the associations found new ways of working together by developing formal partnerships or coalitions. Associations also leveraged the collective expertise of their members and recognized the importance of advocacy and strategic communications to increase awareness and influence behavior.

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Societal Impact Research Project

Primary Audience
Association Professionals
Association Leaders

Research Partners
To be determined

Research Sample
Organizational Members
Individual Members
Nonmembers
Stakeholders

Research Objectives

The Societal Impact Research Advisory Committee is the successor group to the Centennial Research Advisory Group. The purpose is to provide guidance and direction on how to develop and implement findings from Impact Every Day (Centennial Research) and recommend strategic initiatives that complement the Centennial Research findings.

The key findings from Impact Every Day (Centennial Research) influencing the Societal Impact research include the following:

- Associations need to improve the use of research and evidence for strategic decision making.
- Associations vary widely in the ability to demonstrate and measure the impact of what they are doing to make society better, safer, stronger.
- Association leadership expect their organizations to demonstrate transformational leadership to tackle real time issues that truly make a difference.

Research Phases

The research centers on the following key goals:

- Increase the capacity, capability, and competence of associations to demonstrate and measure the effectiveness of their initiatives that contribute to the broader society—their Impact Every Day.
- Increase the awareness of the unique role and contributions associations make every day to make a positive impact on society within the communities and publics our members serve, aligning efforts with the Power of A initiative.
- Identify opportunities to advance the ASAE strategic plan by marrying capacity building in transformational leadership with a cohesive association industry effort that positions ASAE as a vanguard organization leading and modeling transformational leadership.

Research Outputs

The research project is currently underway. Outputs will be determined based on key findings.

Key Findings

The research project is currently underway. Key findings will be developed once all phases of the research have concluded.

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The Decision to Give

Primary Audience
CEOs
C-Suite Executives
Development Officers

Research Partners
Beth Gazley, Ph.D.
Monica Dignam

Research Sample
Members of Cosponsoring Associations

Research Objectives

The study examined association giving practices compared to other donations by study participants. Researchers examine factors that encourage members to give to their associations, and what types of activities build long-term relationships with donors.

Research Phases

A survey was deployed by ASAE on behalf of six cosponsoring associations. Responses from 5,004 participants were collected and analyzed. The data and final analysis were compiled in the book *The Decision to Give: What Motivates Individuals to Support Professional Associations*.

Research Outputs

The Decision to Give: What Motivates Individuals to Support Professional Associations (2010) (book)

- Section 1 What Frames the Decision to Give
- Section 2 The Study: Context and Framework
- Section 3 The Big Picture: Key Findings and Insights
- Section 4 Acting on This Research

The book is no longer available for sale.

Key Findings

Key findings
- Members donate more generously to community causes than associations.
- All members have the potential to become donors, including younger and/or entry-level professionals.
- Members who are highly satisfied with their membership benefits were four times as likely to donate than those who were not.
- Donors were motivated more by benefiting others than themselves.
- The most preferred form of solicitation was to be asked personally by someone the member knows.

Association Compensation and Benefits Study

Primary Audience	C-Suite and HR Professionals Job seekers Industry consultants	
Research Partners	N/A	
Research Sample	Trade and professional associations with paid full-time staff	

Research Objectives

The Association Compensation and Benefits Study provides associations with a basis of comparison to others in the field for compensation and benefits packages at all position levels. It generates data on compensation, benefits, and perks of association executive positions based on specific organizational characteristics, including membership type, budget and staff size, geographic location, IRS tax status, and industry sector.

Research Phases

Survey data has historically been collected, analyzed, and disseminated biennially (every two years), most recently in 2020-2021.

In the most recent edition, the ASAE research department sent survey invitations via email in March 2020 to contacts at 5,967 organizations. These contacts included member and nonmember CEOs, human resources, finance, administration, and operations staff. All participants were required to register with the survey site to prevent unauthorized entry by any staff other than those designated as appropriate survey contacts. Of the 5,967 invited organizations, 605 submitted completed surveys for an overall response rate of 10.1 percent. Each submission included salary and total compensation for all applicable positions in the organization.

Research Outputs

The results of the Research Foundation's Association Compensation and Benefits Study 2020-2021 Edition provide data on salary, total compensation, and employee benefits for 75 executive-level and administrative positions in trade associations and individual membership organizations. Reports are also available for associations in Greater Washington (2020-2021), for CEO compensation (2020-2021), and for individual positions (2020-2021).   Data and reports are available in print form and on ASAE's online interactive benchmarking platform, AssociaMetrics.

Key Findings

The executive summary offers an in-depth analysis of key data, helps leaders and recruiters to accurately interpret trends and changes in compensation and benefits. Other features include:
- compensation data for the CEO, deputy CEO, and 75 other senior-level management and administrative positions
- employment contract and performance evaluation practices
- details on medical, life, accident, and disability insurance

Operating Ratio Report Research

Primary Audience
C-Suite and Finance Professionals
Industry consultants

Research Partners
N/A

Research Sample
Trade and professional associations that file IRS Form 990s

Research Objectives

The Operating Ratio Report provides data and key performance measures to help association leaders (CEOs and CFOs) evaluate their organization's financial and operational performance. Data from the study provides financial and operational benchmarks against similar-sized organizations across key performance ratios.

Research Phases

The sixteenth edition of the Association Operating Ratio Report (ORR) is primarily compiled from the IRS Form 990 data of 11,163 associations. Supplementary information is available based on 147 associations that completed the additional questionnaire. The collection and analysis are conducted every four to five years, most recently in 2021. https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/books-and-benchmarking/financial-and-operational-performance

Research Outputs

The results of the *Association Operating Ratio Report, 16th edition* (2021) provide key performance ratios for associations by revenues, by membership type, by IRS tax status and by geographic scope. The PDF version provides the cut by revenue categories, and access to ASAE's online interactive benchmarking platform, AssociaMetrics, provides additional filters by membership type, by IRS tax status, geographic scope, and a few others to create your own reports. The report contains:

- Key performance ratios in five areas: profitability, productivity and efficiency, leverage, liquidity, and revenue and expense management.
- Revenue ratios as a percentage of overall revenue
- Expense ratios as a percentage of total expenses
- Expense ratios as a percentage of total revenue
- a detailed executive summary designed to put the survey results into perspective

Key Findings

Some of the key performance ratios include net profitability ratio as a measure of profitability, operating efficiency ratio as a measure for productivity and efficiency, as well as personnel productivity, liquidity and leverage measures. An organization's key performance measures are excellent "yardsticks" for gauging the success of an organization and can be used to benchmark against other firms to help leaders evaluate and plan an organization's financial activities, identify areas for improvement, support board presentations, and make recommendations on the allocation of resources.

Association Investment Policies, Practices, and Performance

Primary Audience — Senior-level Finance and Operations Professionals (CFOs, COOs) or Chief Staff Officer if no finance operations professionals were available

Research Partners — Fiducient Advisors, formerly DiMeo Schneider & Associates, LLC

Research Sample — Trade and professional associations that file IRS Form 990s

Research Objectives

The report is designed to help association executives evaluate their own investment strategies, performance, and governance structures relative to those of similar organizations. The data can help associations identify areas where improvements can potentially be made, as well as to provide reference points in areas where there may be questions or concerns. The data can also provide a means to confirm that an association is indeed implementing a series of effective practices.

Research Phases

Survey data are collected, analyzed, and disseminated annually, most recently in September 2020. Invitations were sent to 2,620 associations at which ASAE members were employed. Ultimately, 159 organizations submitted completed surveys, resulting in a final response rate of six percent. The 2020 survey focused on areas of anticipated annual change, such as investment allocations and long-term performance.

Research Outputs

[Association Investment Policies, Practices, and Performance - 2020-2021 Edition](#)

The data in this downloadable report are available via the bookstore and on ASAE's online interactive benchmarking platform, AssociaMetrics. The report is primarily organized by reserve size and include performance metrics captured in the 2014–2020 studies, as well as policy benchmarks captured in the 2019 study. Investment advisors from Fiducient Advisors provide expert insights, a 2019 market overview—the most recent year for which completed data were available, and a COVID-19 supplement. Other topics include investment policy governance, investment strategy, investment vehicles, asset allocation, and investment performance.

Key Findings

Key data provided by the 2020–2021 report include the percentage of respondents who reported using an outside investment advisor to assist in the management of their reserve funds, which size associations were more likely to delegate the oversight of investment reserves to an investment committee or finance committee versus staff, those associations who tend to have larger allocations to equities, and the percentage of associations reporting drawing upon reserves on some basis.

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ONGOING [DATA COLLECTED HISTORICALLY EVERY FIVE YEARS, WITH SOME GAPS, LAST UPDATE WAS IN 2018 & 2019]
DEFINING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Benchmarking in Association Management: Policies and Procedures

Primary Audience — All staff at trade and professional associations

Research Partners — Consultation with appropriate section councils as needed

Research Sample — Staff across functional areas of association management

Research Objectives — ASAE's Benchmarking in Association Management series addresses the primary functional areas of associations and their unique key data points. For the 2021–2022 edition, functional areas will be under review, and it is envisioned that ASAE's Committees may assist in this review.

Research Phases — The primary target audience for each of the functional areas differs, and thus fourteen separate surveys are conducted and are deployed in phases. However, the data is collated in two volumes in the most recent version (2018 & 2019). The report breaks out survey data by annual budget, and by type of association (trade or professional).

Survey data for this research were last collected and published in 2018 and 2019. Volume 1 was published in 2018 and included these functional areas:
- Component Relations
- Credentialing
- Information Technology
- Marketing and Communications (including social media)
- Meetings
- Membership
- Professional Development/Education/Learning
- Public Relations
- Publications

Volume 2 was published in 2019 and included these functional areas:
- Governance
- Public Policy
- Human Resources
- Finance
- Technology

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Research Outputs

Benchmarking in Association Management: Policies and Procedures, Vol. 1 (2018) and *Benchmarking in Association Management: Policies and Procedures, Vol. 2 (2019)* focuses on key metrics and policy benchmarks specific to the association industry. Association professionals can benchmark against similar organizations to identify potential areas for improvement; set target goals; or justify FTEs, policies, operational efforts, and more.

Key data points (2018):
- Budgets for functional areas
- Outsourcing practices across functional areas
- FTEs across functional areas
- Membership benefits
- Membership retention rates
- Membership classes
- Dues revenue
- Prevalence and types of components
- Meeting attendance
- Prevalence and types of learning programs

Key Findings

Key findings vary by functional area. A sampling from the table of contents for Volumes 1 and 2 are provided:

Volume 1 (2018)

Membership (total 27 tables)

Table 1.1 Number of Full-Time Equivalent Membership Staff

Table 1.2 Annual Budget for Membership Functions (Thousands of Dollars)

Table 1.3 Geographical Scope of Membership

Table 1.4 Number of Individual Members

Table 1.5 Number of Organizational Members

Component Relations (total 6 tables)

Table 2.1 Staffing and Budget for Component Relations Functions

Table 2.2 Types of Components

Table 2.3 Countries and/or Regions with Components

Table 2.4 Component Policies and Structures

Table 2.5 Membership Arrangement with Components

Marketing and Communications (total 8 tables)

Table 3.1 Staffing and Budget for Marketing and Communications Functions

Table 3.2 Fulfillment of Marketing and Communications Functions

Table 3.3 Use of Tracking Metrics for Marketing Efforts

Table 3.4 Use of Tracking Metrics for Social Media

Table 3.5 Use of Social Media Management Service or Platform

Public Relations (total 4 tables)

Table 4.1 Staffing and Budget for Public Relations Functions

Public Policy (total 9 tables)

Table 2.1 Staffing and Budget for Advocacy and Public Policy Functions by Organization Type and Total Annual Budget

Table 2.2 Advocacy and Public Policy Activities by Organization Type and Total Annual Budget

Table 2.3 Advocacy and Public Policy Activities by Scope of Membership

Table 2.4 Number of Lobbyists by Organization Type and Total Annual Budget

Table 2.5 Number of Lobbyists by Scope of Membership

Human Resources (Total 45 tables)

Table 3.1 Staffing for HR Functions by Organization Type and Total Annual Budget

Table 3.2 Staffing for HR Functions by Total Size

Table 3.3 Total Compensation and Benefits Costs and Costs Per Employee in 2018 by Organization Type and Total Annual Budget

Table 3.4 Total Compensation and Benefits Costs and Costs Per Employee in 2018 by Total Staff Size

Table 3.5 Total Professional Development Budget by Organization Type and Total Annual Budget

Finance (total 7 tables)

Table 4.1 Staffing and Budget for Finance Functions by Organization Type and Total Annual Budget

Table 4.2 Outsourced Finance Functions

Table 4.3 Start of Fiscal Year

Table 4.4 Audit Committee

Table 4.5 Authority to Hire or Fire Audit Firm

Information Technology (total 4 tables)

Table 5.1 Staffing and Budget for Information Technology Functions

Table 5.2 Policies on Data Governance and Structure

Table 5.3 Fulfillment of Information Technology Functions

Table 5.4 Changes in Budget for Information Technology Functions from Prior Fiscal Year

Global Management Series

Primary Audience
U.S.-based organizations that are engaged in or interested in global expansion

Research Partners
Conducted in collaboration with MCI Group

Research Sample
CEOs
C-Suite

Research Objectives

The Global Management Series research initiative is designed to describe association globalization best practices and identify the effective strategies associations employ to develop and sustain global growth outside their market.

Research Phases

The first phase consisted of survey research performed in collaboration with Bisamer Research, which conducted analysis of survey data collected by ASAE. The survey received results from 330 associations about their global efforts. The survey aimed to identify characteristics that distinguished "growers," organizations that increased global membership or product revenue during the three years prior to the survey. The survey sample included associations with a national or international scope that had at least one ASAE member on staff.

The second phase consisted of qualitative research, including focus groups and interviews performed and reported by Mark Athitakis, an ASAE contract editor for *Associations Now*. During in-depth phone interviews and seven focus groups, participants delved into questions on strategy, partnerships, risk management, innovation, identification of potential markets, and culture. The study examined the differences in strategy between associations reporting global revenue growth and those experiencing stagnant or declining numbers. MCI Group staff also contributed "advisor insights" to complement the research findings to be included in the report on China.

The third phase saw the development of a global maturity assessment tool based on findings from the first two phases. Rockbridge Associates worked with the ASAE Research Foundation and MCI Group to develop the assessment.

Research Outputs

Achieving Global Growth: Establishing & Maintaining Global Markets (2014)
This report shares the findings from the first phase of research. It outlines six factors that differentiate growers (associations experiencing membership and/or revenue growth from non-U.S. customers) from non-growers (those experiencing stagnation or decline).

Global Growth Strategies (2015)
This report, based on qualitative research, summarizes the second phase research findings, provides recommendations, and provides a special focus on China. The report's infographic distills the main recommendations.

Association Global Maturity: Critical Actions for Successful International Growth (2017)
This report explores the findings from the third phase assessment research. Using data collected from a survey of association leaders, the report provides new insight on association global success, including

- an examination of the seven components of global maturity—the key elements that contribute to association success abroad
- a look at what the most globally mature associations do differently than most associations
- an evaluation of the areas in which the association sector must improve to succeed outside the United States.

Global Maturity Assessment (2017)
The Global Maturity Assessment, hosted on ASAE's AssociaMetrics platform, is a sophisticated tool for association leaders to determine effectiveness in seven major global readiness areas:
- strategic and business planning
- management and organizational culture
- leadership engagement
- market insight
- value proposition and engagement model
- global organization, roles, and support
- local operations and service delivery capacity

Reports result in scores for all readiness areas, areas of success and opportunity, and links to supportive resources. Assessment takers receive results that show their association's level of readiness and compare them to benchmark data from the research.

Key Findings

The research distilled five recommendations for global success:
1. Dedicate commitment and effort to achieve better global growth.
2. Introduce a variety of relevant products and services to promote engagement among international audiences.
3. Integrate global and local operations to sustain business activity.
4. Secure partnerships that open market access and improve local capacity.
5. Consider opportunities in emerging markets.

Key Takeaways from Global Growth Strategies:
The qualitative research yielded four overarching recommendations for association leaders looking to take their operations global, or expand or improve current efforts:

1. Establish a research-driven plan that persuades stakeholders to invest.
2. Educate yourself on culture and adapt accordingly.
3. Invest mindfully but make a strong commitment.
4. Protect your brand.

An infographic provides more suggestions from the research.

The research on working in China resulted in the following recommendations:
1. Find partners with a mind to establishing clear contractual relationships.
2. Focus on offerings besides membership.
3. Prepare to make a substantial investment.
4. Establish goals without anticipating profit, especially early on.

5. Recognize the different perception of intellectual property.
6. Have a presence and understand the regulatory landscape if you establish a brick–and–mortar one.
7. Know that the government can be mercurial.
8. Establish success metrics besides revenue.
9. Consider the halo effect.

Associations tend to have achieved a greater level of maturity in certain areas, especially leadership engagement—the degree to which the leadership is committed to international operations and demonstrates it with resources and shared commitment.

In contrast, areas in which associations have considerable room for improvement include market insight and local operations and service delivery capacity. Market insight consists of gathering critical data about members, customers, and the market environment. Local operations and service delivery refers to the degree to which associations have planned the practical execution of their international operations and how they have adapted their approach to service delivery in those markets.

The most globally mature associations were found to do certain things more regularly or systematically than less globally advanced organizations:
- Globally mature organizations have a clear, understandable, and measurable global strategy.
- Their boards include individuals with experience or are located in the international markets where the associations operate.
- They have boards who serve as champions of growth.
- They have an informed product strategy that is based on input from local leaders, member/customer feedback, market research, and intelligence.
- They practice market segmentation in their most important local markets, customizing tactics for customer, member, and prospect segments.
- Management in local markets is regularly involved in planning and strategy (instead of centralized planning with top-down execution).
- They ensure their local market capabilities complement the capabilities of headquarters without overlap or conflict.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS
2018-20
DEFINING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Association Business Ventures: Healthcare

Primary Audience — Healthcare-related executives and staff

Research Partners — Research conducted in collaboration with Association Ventures and Health Care Committee

Research Sample — Healthcare-related association executives and staff from a variety of healthcare-related associations

Research Objectives — This project is founded on the premise that healthcare associations have an historic opportunity to bring new business-oriented solutions, services, and products to meet changing member needs and generate new revenues. This project will produce research findings and practical derivative products for use by ASAE and its members that focus on the specific needs of health-related professional and trade associations. The impact of addressing these needs would be to inspire and support widespread change management within health associations to embrace venture entrepreneurship as a viable path to new value creation that advances the mission and financial goals of health-related associations.

Research Phases — A national survey of healthcare-related associations launched in April 2019. The survey asked about organizational experience with entrepreneurship, business venturing, and lean innovation. The survey sample included a full variety of types of healthcare-related associations (size, location and mission). The survey results help to define the "comfort zone" of association leaders and what they need to achieve venture readiness; the survey will also validate the venture readiness causal model of capacity, common gaps, and workable solutions.

Research Outputs — This research culminated in a series of research briefs and self-scoring assessments based on the maturity model identified through the study. The first report, Advancing Business-Venture Innovation: A Readiness Tool for Health Associations summarizes the research effort. Four additional readiness reports will delve into each of 8 identified domains (2 domains per report) and offer leaders the opportunity to self-assess and score their organization's readiness. Collectively, the reports are intended to provide association leaders with an informed mindset and tools for organizational change and improvement, such as using a readiness diagnosis to correct the barriers to business innovation.

Although the research focused on healthcare associations, executives from all types of associations can benefit from the baseline measurements, pathways, and tools provided to improve their business- development capacity.

Key Findings

This research applied and validated a maturity model developed by the project's principal researcher, Association Ventures. The model was used to assess participating healthcare association executives' performance scores against eight areas of adeptness that support business innovation readiness. The associations scored at the mature level of readiness in only one area: diverse talent, where positive cultures and recognition of the value of diversity drove high ratings.

In four readiness domains—operational agility, digital practice, catalytic leadership, and foresight governance—on average, executives scored their associations as lagging, or below the overall mean score of 66 percent. In the other three—engaged ecosystems, collective purpose, and empowerment culture—average scoring reflected early or progressing levels of maturity.

Key reasons cited for the scores:
- Diverse talent: positive culture and recognized value of diversity
- Operational agility: lack of process, metrics, and budget linkage to project management
- Digital practice: digital and data platforms not embedded and viewed as a core resource
- Catalytic leadership: external funds lacking for leaders to support innovators
- Foresight governance: lack of attention to disruptive drivers and monitoring assignments
- Engaged ecosystems: lack of co-creation of value with external business partners
- Collective purpose: clearly known mission but innovation alignment lacking
- Empowerment culture: constructive internal exchange valued but lack of testing ideas as a path to learning

While the scores reflected in the foundation study provide insights, the real value of the work is in providing associations reference points for improving their ability to create new value. With the maturity tool in hand, and some guidance, an association can make two comparisons: to peers' mean scores and to a best-practice reference score reflected in the model.

Metrics for Success - Measuring Performance: Purpose, Process, and Practice (2017)

Primary Audience
Association executives at trade and professional associations

Research Partners
Developed by the Foundation Research Committee & performed by Root Cause

Research Sample
CEOs
Association leaders

Research Objectives

The *Metrics for Success* study looked at the structures associations use to define success, mark progress, and ultimately achieve their desired outcomes. Examining these systems specifically as they apply to associations was central to the study's aims.

The study was designed to define and describe performance measurement models and methods that are effective in helping associations evaluate operational efficiency, programmatic outcomes, and progress toward mission attainment. It also sought to describe how information gathered from performance models and methods can be used to inform effective decision making.

Research Phases

Phase 1 of the study included a literature review that addressed the evolution of performance measurement in businesses and nonprofits.

Phase 2 of the study examined how performance measurement systems are applied in associations. Root Cause received survey responses from 85 ASAE members with a wide range of satisfaction in their performance measurement systems. The researchers followed up with eight in-depth interviews with a representative group of respondents.

Research Outputs

Why Performance Measurement? (2016)
This research brief captures findings from the first phase literature review. The brief touches on the history and theories of performance measurement as well as a preliminary discussion of best practices.

Measuring Performance: Purpose, Process, and Practice (2017)
This report captures the complete findings from the study, providing examples of how associations are approaching performance measurement and identifying challenges to and lessons learned from their processes.

Key Findings

- Components of a successful performance management system include a planning document, performance measurement framework, and performance measurement implementation guide.
- Findings indicated that successful performance measurement systems are planned systematically.
- Effective organizations use detailed planning documents, define specific markers of success, and practice continuous revision of the overall plan.
- Creating a data driven culture is important, as is tying the use of data to performance.
- The methods of collecting, storing, and analyzing data are integral to the effectiveness of a performance measurement strategy.

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Practice to Profession

Primary Audience — Association professionals

Research Partners — Researchers from a variety of universities, led by Ian Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., of the University of Warwick

Research Sample — Variety of data sources

Research Objectives

The *Practice to Profession* study examined how occupational groups form professional identities and the influence of associations in that process. The study sought to

- define what a profession is: its characteristics and responsibilities, how it evolves, and recognition of professional status from society.
- determine, via case studies, the process toward professionalization, the perceived benefits of professionalization and the perceived challenges.
- create a framework for associations, a continuum of professionalization upon which they could assess their position and evaluate the pros and cons of moving in either direction along the continuum.
- apply the findings to association management professionals.

Research Phases

Information was gathered through multiple methods. In a comprehensive literature review, the research team assessed professionalization, both historically and today. In-depth case studies and analysis of existing data were used to examine how associations form, and the points in that process that define the roles organizations play for the professions they serve.

The research drew upon two main data sources. The first were 19 interviews conducted between September 2015 and January 2016. These included

- representatives from a targeted group of ten professional associations
- focus groups with informed practitioners, including association managers
- representatives from organizations which serve a significant portion of the association sector, such as ASAE and the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE).

The interviews were supplemented with information from secondary data sources, including the webpages of the participating professional associations, ICE and ASAE publications, and anonymized statistical information relating to the ASAE's membership data. Data were also gathered from the following statistical databases:

- the CareerOneStop data repository (https://www.careeronestop.org/) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, which provides cross-sectional (2015) data relating to national and international professional associations, certification programs and the level, and occupational distribution of state licensing
- the National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States (NTPAUS) directory, which provides data on certification programs and providers between 2008 and 2016
- Gale Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Associations, which provides data on the population and size of professional associations from 2004–2016

Research Outputs

From Practice to Profession: First Findings from a Study on the Nature and Process of Professionalization (2016)
This research brief summarizes the findings of the literature review with a focus on the historical and current nature of professionalization. It defines in a broad way the characteristics of professions.

Three short reports highlight different key components of the final research:
1. The first report describes the landscape of professional associations and the distinct categories that reflect how associations serve their members. Central to these findings is a definition of "qualifying associations"—the most common type of professional association.
2. The second report will look at the formation of associations, with particular emphasis on key decision points association leaders reach in the process of defining the core mission their organizations serve to members and professions.
3. The third brief will discuss how associations signal quality for the professions they represent, and how trends in both professionalization overall and professionalization in the association world continue to be relevant to leaders.

These three reports are available as PDF downloads in a single zip file.

Key Findings

Findings from secondary sources showed that professions are forming at a higher rate, partly due to technological advances and increasing specialization in certain fields. As the number and type of professions expand and diversify, member-serving organizations are taking on more roles. Researchers identified specific types of associations. The researchers produced a road map of the stages of formation of professional associations identified as: founding events; defining core knowledge; taking on a certification mission; raising standards; and pursuit of regulation, state or otherwise.

Association Inclusion Index

Primary Audience
C-Suite and D+I professionals
Board members

Research Partners
N/A

Research Sample
N/A

Research Objectives

The *Association Inclusion Index* was designed in to assess an association's current philosophies, policies, and practices with regards to its diversity and inclusion efforts. It was the first diversity and inclusion online assessment tool specifically for associations. Originally launched in 2013, the self-assessment tool was updated and relaunched in 2017 and is accessed on ASAE's online interactive benchmarking platform, AssociaMetrics.

Association leaders can assess their organization's diversity and inclusion practices against validated, effective practices in five domains.
- mission and focus
- roles and leadership accountability
- resources
- operations
- communications and culture

Participants can compare their results against established performance indicators (Exceed Expectations, Meet Expectations, and Needs Improvement) in each of the five domains and 19 subdomains.

Research Phases

The research followed a standard research process of design, development, fielding, collection, and validation.

Definitions for Diversity and Inclusion used in the assessment (as defined by ASAE in 2013):
- **Diversity**: Diversity refers to the composition of a group of people from any number of demographic backgrounds, identities, and the collective strength of their experiences, beliefs, values, skills, and perspectives. The variability in a diverse group is apparent in the characteristics we see and hear as well as through behaviors and expressions that we encounter and experience in our workplaces and organizations. Diverse organizations are not by definition inclusive.
- **Inclusion:** Inclusion is the act of establishing philosophies, policies, practices, and procedures to ensure equal access to opportunities and resources to support individuals in contributing to the organization's success. Inclusion creates infrastructure for allowing the diversity within the organization to exist and thrive in a manner that can enhance innovation and problem solving. Inclusive organizations are, by definition, diverse at all levels.

Resource Guide of Industry and Market Research Initiatives

Research Outputs

At the conclusion and submission of the self-assessment by an organization, a rating for each subdomain is calculated. If ratings fall within certain specific ranges of min and max, the ratings are then interpreted as either, Needs Improvement, Meets Expectations or Exceeds Expectations, respectively. Organizations are provided with a final report containing overall ratings, interpretations, and recommendations.

Key Findings

Assessment results will vary by organization. The assessment questionnaire is organized as follows:

- Organizational Profile
- Domain A: Mission and Focus
    - A1. Mission & Focus
    - A2. Global and International
- Domain B: Roles & Leadership Accountability
    - B1. Board of Directors
    - B2. Membership
    - B3. Volunteer Groups
    - B4. Senior Administration
    - B5. Accountability and Strategy
- Domain C: Resources
    - C1. Fundraising/ Resource Acquisition
    - C2. D&I as a Cost or Investment
- Domain D: Operations
    - D1. Hiring
    - D2. Policies
    - D3. Equal Opportunity Employment
    - D4. Retention
    - D5. Vendors
    - D6. Organizational Performance
- Domain E: Communications and Culture
    - E1. Cultural Competency
    - E2. Identity Safety
    - E3. Marketing/Communications
    - E4. Meetings/Event Planning

Association Impact on Diversity and Inclusion in Professions

| Primary Audience | D+I professionals | Research Partners | The D+I Committee
The University of Oregon
Dyana Mason, Ph.D. | Research Sample | D+I professionals
CEOs |

Research Objectives

This study sought an understanding of what associations do to promote diversity and inclusion in the professions they represent. The research has been designed to address the following topics:

- describe how associations identify underrepresented groups
- describe the challenges, needs, roles, and opportunities associations face as they assume Diversity and Inclusion (D+I) roles in the professions they represent
- describe ways associations promote D+I in recruitment of underrepresented groups in the professions they represent
- describe ways associations promote D+I in retention of underrepresented groups in the professions they represent
- identify ways associations establish and/or strengthen partnerships in an effort to increase underrepresented groups into the professions they represent
- define practices for aligning organizational strategy in D+I with goals for increasing diversity and underrepresented groups within a profession an association represents.

Research Phases

The research project was planned for multiple phases. The first phase, conducted in Toronto, consisted of focus groups of association executives who discussed diversity and inclusion in their profession, obstacles to diversity and inclusion, and collaboration on diversity and inclusion.

The second phase built on the focus group findings using a survey of association leaders. The survey asked respondents if and how their professions conceptualize diversity, their current strategies, experiences, opportunities and obstacles for collaboration and measurement efforts.

Research Outputs

A research brief that captured key survey findings, *Promoting Workforce Diversity and Inclusion: An Analysis of Association Efforts Across the Fields They Serve*, was released at the ASAE's Annual Meeting.

Key Findings

Associations are well-positioned to advance diversity and inclusion (D+I) across the workforce. However, while D+I efforts are widely supported across the association community, associations are at different stages of program implementation that targets their member professions. A set of focus groups and a survey of association leaders resulted in several key takeaways:

- **Opportunity for action.** Only about half of the association leaders who participated in the survey engaged in some sort of diversity and inclusion practices in their organizations or promoted those practices in their field. A lack of financial resources was the most common barrier to greater action.
- **Opportunity for collaboration.** Forty percent of respondents said that their associations worked in collaboration with individuals or entities to advance diversity and inclusion efforts. Commonly cited partners include individual members (76.9 percent), other associations (74 percent), and boards of directors (73 percent).
- **Defining diversity.** The majority of respondents identified race (84 percent) and gender (82 percent) as the most important dimensions of diversity to their field. A wide range of other characteristics, including ethnic group, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation were also identified as important.
- **Recruitment and retention.** Respondents' organizations most commonly sought to increase diversity in the field through recruitment materials aimed at diverse candidates (50 percent) and supporting job fairs to recruit diverse candidates (46 percent). In interviewing, associations were most likely to promote the use of structured processes, which promote more equal evaluation of candidates. To retain diverse professionals in the field, associations commonly promote employee participation in affinity groups (63 percent) and offer internal leadership training (53 percent).

Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion in Membership Associations

Primary Audience
CEOs
D+I professionals

Research Partners
North Carolina State University
Hyatt

Research Sample
CEOs
D+I professionals

Research Objectives

The research aimed to determine reasons why diversity and inclusion initiatives work in some membership organizations and not in others. To inform ASAE's efforts to support diversity and inclusion progress in the association community, researchers examined efforts in associations to increase diversity and inclusion.

Research Phases

The research was conducted in three parts. In the first phase, researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review on the business case for diversity. The second phase consisted of an empirical examination of existing data on diversity and inclusion. In the third phase of the research, researchers conducted a focus group and phone interviews with association staff leaders about their experiences, intentions, and reflections. These qualitative data were assessed in the context of existing quantitative data.

Research Outputs

Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion in Membership Associations: An Interview Study (2011) This white paper offers an in-depth analysis of the common themes that emerged throughout the phases of the research project.

Key Findings

- Associations with a significant emphasis on diversity and inclusion share a high level of comfort with change, conflict, and the empowerment of others.
- Some associations use "diversity" and "inclusion" interchangeably.
- There is no single method of implementing diversity and inclusion efforts; formalization of diversity and inclusion policies and practices varies across associations.
- Real inclusion goes beyond extending an invitation, and attracting diverse constituencies requires catering to a diverse set of needs.
- Monitoring, measuring, and meeting diversity goals are distinct activities.
- Even with a champion, powerful individuals and groups can make or break a diversity and inclusion initiative.
- Focusing on one particular group can be seen as favoritism, and tensions can be alleviated by communicating to members why a program is focused in a certain way.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) and Association Leadership

Primary Audience
CEOs
DEI professionals

Research Partners
The D+I Committee
Trifecta

Research Sample
DEI SMEs
DEI Professionals
CEOs
Association board members

Research Objectives

In a continued effort to examine elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in trade and professional associations, this research addresses leadership development; board composition, performance, and effectiveness; and governance practices as they relate to DEI strategies and goals. The research examines concepts such as the current state of board DEI, and ways in which DEI strategies are established and measured. The study also considers perspectives from which DEI may be influenced, such as foresight, societal racial inequities, and a global health pandemic.

Research Phases

This research occurred in two phases. The first phase consisted of a review of published literature and strategic interviews with DEI experts in the association sector. Findings from this phase helped to inform the second phase, an online quantitative survey of ASAE members.

Research Outputs

The anticipated release of the research's final report is Fall 2021.

A one-pager detailing the study's preliminary findings, **DEI and Association Governance Preliminary Findings PDF.**

A presentation of key findings coupled with the panel conversation, **DEI and Association Governance: Expert Q&A Forum**.

Key Findings

- Traditional board recruiting practices result in respectful cultures, but not necessarily new ideas or strategic foresight. Efforts to recruit specific demographics lead to dramatic success that will not happen on its own. Change will not occur immediately as board seats do not turn over often.
- Diversity is the most established of the DEI elements, garners the most attention, and is most often measured. Equity is an emerging dimension for many associations. Many boards lack a sense of urgency in addressing inclusion.
- Association boards may not be recognizing the value of setting goals and measuring results of DEI practices. Boards who have goals in place and track metrics are significantly more likely to realize every benefit associated with DEI.

Board Member Competencies and Selection

Primary Audience CEOs

Research Partners Governance Task Force
Texas A&M University

Research Sample CEOs

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to identify recruitment and selection processes that support optimal board performance. Researchers have examined the challenges associations face in finding capable board members with the right competencies—and how to best address those challenges. Researchers explored how the following can be applied to cultivate the best board-selection efforts:

- identifying competencies and board composition characteristics
- cultivating potential board members
- enacting and maintaining effective selection practices
- changing board-selection practices when needed

This multi-phased research initiative explored effective strategies for managing change, including an examination of the internal and external factors that influence board selection. Results will provide guidance to association executives in determining when change in board-selection processes is warranted and, when warranted, what effective approaches might be used to implement that change.

Research Phases

The study, concluded late fall 2019, consisted of three phases: an extensive literature review, illustrative case studies, and a widespread survey of association leaders.

The first phase literature review was conducted on a range of topics:

- contingency factors
- change management
- prospective board member attitudes and motivations
- cultivation practices
- board-selection practices

The second phase consisted of case studies with exemplary associations that have effectively implemented board-selection processes. Leaders from the associations were interviewed to draw out key themes and patterns.

The third phase consisted of a survey of association CEOs, with questions focusing on gaining a better understanding of the prevalence of board-selection processes and attitudes and interests in board service. The results and analysis of this research will be released in summer of 2019.

Research Outputs

Two products were released in the summer of 2019. The first was the research report *Building Better Association Boards: Advancing Performance through Nomination, Recruitment, and Selection Processes*, which included a detailed summary of the findings. The second product was the book *Recruit the Right Board: Proven Processes for Selecting Critical Competencies*, which detailed the full findings and included a robust resources section of tools for organizations to use in transforming their board selection processes.

Key Findings

Research identified common core competencies in five primary leadership skill areas needed by boards:

- group skills: team orientation
- interpersonal skills: communication, relational, influence, and reputation
- personal skills: strategic, innovative
- technical skills: knowledge of the field, expertise, and experience
- personal attributes: integrity, commitment, capacity

The research also documented effective board selection processes and practices of exemplary organizations.

What Makes High-Performing Boards

Primary Audience   CEOs

Research Partners   Governance Task Force
Indiana University, with Beth Gazley, Ph.D., and Ashley Bowers

Research Sample   CEOs

Research Objectives

This study aimed to create an association-specific understanding of board practices, creating a snapshot of current practices and to provide a benchmarking resource for associations. Researchers surveyed member-serving organizations about organizational environment, board structure, board-selection procedures and challenges, governance models, board development and self-assessment, and other governance practices to identify intentional patterns of behavior in organizations that support high board performance. Some of the key questions the research examined were:

- How do organizations attract the right competencies to their boards?
- Is there a sweet spot for board size?
- In which areas of responsibility do CEOs rate their boards highest, and where do they find them lacking?
- How well are boards assessing and reporting on their own performance?

Research Phases

The research consisted of a survey of 1,585 association executives. They were asked extensive questions about the structure, dynamics, and performance of their boards. Analysis of survey findings identified key drivers and markers of board performance, and what behaviors and characteristics set high-performing boards apart from others. Research also compiled specific, proven techniques from successful boards. The results were compiled in a book, and also spurred further research (which resulted in the book *Transformational Governance*) on the processes association leaders and boards go through to become high-performing boards.

Research Outputs

What Makes High-Performing Boards: Effective Governance Practices in Member-Serving Organizations (2013)
This book describes key drivers of association board performance, including strategic orientation, board recruitment and training, and accountability. It details the importance of careful board member selection, training staff to work with board members, and the importance of a culture of learning and accountability. Twenty markers of board performance are identified and discussed.

Key Findings

The research identified a number of common themes:

- Because the association sector is so diverse, there is no one recipe for a high-performing board.
- Tax status, age, and membership structure influence boards in such factors as how elections are conducted, the role of the CEO on the board, and the rate of board turnover.
- Finding qualified board members is a challenge for many organizations.
- Boards place a limited emphasis on performance measurement.
- High-performing boards have a strong strategic focus.

- Training, of both staff and board members, are associated with high-performing boards.
- Board size matters, but board focus matters more.
- There is a strong link between growing organizations and high-performing boards.

Transformational Governance

Primary Audience — CEOs

Research Partners — Governance Task Force
Beth Gazley, Ph.D.
Katha Kissman

Research Sample — CEOs

Research Objectives

This research was on outgrowth of the *What Makes High-Performing Boards* study and was designed to fill gaps in the existing body of knowledge on governance in associations. Specifically, it looked closely at how associations make the transition to becoming a high-performing board, focusing on the change process itself, and how associations have undergone it. Researchers aimed to develop strategies and resources for association leaders to identify problems and solutions.

Research Phases

The first source for the research were the results from the 2013 study that the High-Performing Boards research was based on. Using the characteristics of high-performing boards identified in that study, researchers designed a second study to identify the actions associations can take to get to a point of high performance.

The next phase of the research included case studies of member-serving organizations with high-performing boards about the strategies and practices they used to get there. Additionally, focus groups were conducted, and interviews were conducted with select participants. The results were synthesized in the book *Transformational Governance: How Boards achieve Extraordinary Change.*

Research Outputs

Transformational Governance: How Boards Achieve Extraordinary Change (2015)
This book looks at the stages and processes CEOs and their staff used to bring about significant changes in governance practices, and outlines actions a board can take to achieve desired results, including techniques for altering expectations and changing bylaws, structures, policies, and roles. The book shares actual tools and activities used by 85 transformed associations. It emphasizes diagnosis and problem solving, discusses how to get the most from assessment and evaluation, and provides strategies and resources.

Key Findings

Organizations that underwent a transformational change to become a high-performing board were found to have followed some common processes and experiences, including:
- streamlining and simplifying processes, like shortening bylaws and documents, implementing consent agendas, and reducing the number of standing committees
- having more thoughtfully structured and more frequent meetings to maintain the pace of change and ensure continuity of strategic thinking
- recruiting board members with the right skills for the job, and identifying and recruit prospects based on these skills
- ongoing education and self-evaluation

Mutually Beneficial Volunteer Relationships

Primary Audience CEOs

Research Partners Mariner Management & Marketing

 Kevin Whorton

Research Sample CEOs

Volunteers & Membership

Research Objectives

This study was designed to determine what internal operational systems form the basis of mutually beneficial volunteer relationships in an association. The research was intended to explore what could be done to ensure satisfaction in volunteer activities for both associations and volunteers. Objectives were to understand how return on investment is designed and measured for volunteer programs and what kind of ROI associations were getting; determine factors of volunteer satisfaction and to what extent members experienced them; and find out what operational structures associations have in place to facilitate mutually beneficial volunteerism.

Research Phases

- Phase 1: Initial Scan—identified respondents to self-assess the quality of their own volunteer management program.
- Phase 2: Chief Staff Officer Polls— conducted a short poll of senior leadership to identify a mix of programs in volunteer systems to gain the perspectives of volunteers of their experiences and their association management volunteer systems.
- Phase 3: Qualitative Interviews—conduct interviews and compared staff and volunteer satisfaction with the structure and performance of the volunteer management systems. This analysis informed this report on the complete findings of the survey research.
- Phase 4: Surveys with Member Samples— conduct a quantitative survey of association members
- Phase 5: Association Performance Data—employ a scorecard approach to collecting performance data from the associations that have participated by providing samples.

Research Outputs

Achieving Mutually Beneficial Volunteer Relationships: Summary of Phase I (2016)
This report shares findings from a survey of 1,016 unique associations exploring the overall structure, general processes, composition, and size of each association's volunteer management system as well as staff perceptions of the efficacy of the systems and performance of the volunteers.

Mutually Beneficial Volunteerism: Opportunities for Enhancing Association Volunteer Management Systems (2017)
This report contains the complete findings of the research. It covers volunteer perceptions of association volunteer management systems and compares staff and volunteer satisfaction. It is based on survey data collected from more than 25,000 survey respondents.

Key Findings

Overall, findings showed that engagement was high with members who did volunteer, though associations needed to work on engaging a wider pool of volunteers. Associations encountered some challenges in finding qualified candidates for positions.

Key Takeaways from Phase I Summary:

- Volunteerism increases member engagement.
- Ongoing communication between staff and volunteers is important, including volunteer training and collaborative work.
- Committee structures should be evaluated on an ongoing basis, and associations should be flexible in this area.
- Associations face challenges in finding volunteer candidates who are qualified for many positions.
- Evaluation of volunteer experiences and recruiting a representative pool of volunteers are weak spots for many associations.

Key Takeaways from Mutually Beneficial Volunteerism:

- Volunteers provide both direct and indirect value to associations.
- Associations have, to an extent, implemented systems that are mutually beneficial for volunteers and their organizations.
- Volunteers want to contribute to their association in meaningful ways that are aligned to their skill set.
- Staff and volunteers want to work within a collaborative system.
- Volunteer job models need to be updated to meet current lifestyle and workplace demands.
- Recruitment and selection processes are both areas of growth for organizations to engage a wider pool of potential volunteers (e.g., not just the ones who raised their hand).
- Associations should implement assessment practices.

The Decision to Volunteer

Primary Audience

CEOs

Professional associations

Membership/Volunteer relations professionals

Research Partners

Beth Gazley, Ph.D.

Monica Dignam

Research Sample

Members of cosponsoring associations

Research Objectives

This comprehensive study sought to identify volunteers and draw comparisons between association volunteering and members' other civic activities such as community volunteering. The researchers examined what motivates members to volunteer, and what factors contribute to volunteer satisfaction and retention. The research also evaluated the demographic characteristics of volunteers.

Research Phases

A survey was deployed through 23 cosponsoring associations, resulting in 26,305 responses. Survey participants were asked questions in three broad areas: volunteer behavior in general, volunteering behavior specifically for the cosponsoring association, and demographic characteristics.

Research Outputs

The Decision to Volunteer: Why People Give Their Time and How You Can Engage Them (2008)
This book contains the data and analysis for the volunteer survey.

Key Findings

- Association members are highly engaged as volunteers, just not always with their association.
- The decision to volunteer is driven by values.
- Direct asks are the most effective recruitment method.
- Younger members are willing to volunteer, and associations would do well to reach out.
- Volunteering benefits the individual professionally.
- Ad hoc volunteers should be supported and acknowledged.
- Organizational strategies can support or discourage volunteering.

Holistic Volunteer Management Models

Primary Audience
CEOs
Volunteer professionals

Research Partners
Mariner Management & Marketing

Research Sample
TBD

Research Objectives

This research initiative builds on previous research (Mutually Beneficial Volunteerism – 2017 and Decision to Volunteer - 2008) and is intended to examine holistic models of volunteer management in trade and professional associations. This research will consider a breadth of strategic and operational volunteer management elements, such as (but not limited to) planning, work design, recruitment, screening, training, supervision, monitoring, evaluation, engagement, recognition, and reporting. The research will further examine volunteers in trade and professional associations as members and customers, and also look at their unique role as members of the association's workforce. A wide range of volunteer functions and commitments, like ad-hoc opportunities and governance responsibilities, should be examined.

The outcomes of the research should provide data that also answer:
- What strategies and actions inform the development of holistic models to effectively manage volunteers within trade and professional associations?
- What barriers prevent effective volunteer management across organizations?

Research Phases

- Phase 1: Prepare the groundwork for conducting the various studies (for example, identify the interview and focus group targets for Study 1; develop a list of association professionals to serve on the Research Council; develop the list of associations and association volunteers for the survey-based studies; etc.).
- Phase 2: Two qualitative research techniques (in-depth interviews, focus groups, etc.) to generate a coherent working definition of "effective" with as many objectively measurable attributes as possible.
- Phase 3: A questionnaire-based survey of associations to address the research questions.
- Phase 4: A questionnaire-based survey of volunteers to address the research questions.

Research Outputs

The research project is currently underway. Outputs will be determined based on key findings.

Key Findings

The research project is currently underway. Key findings will be developed once all phases of the research have concluded.

ASAE ForesightWorks

| Primary Audience | All association types
CEOs
C-Suite
Governing Boards | Research Partners | Signature I
Foresight Alliance | Research Sample | N/A |

Research Objectives

ASAE ForesightWorks will equip association leaders with a continual stream of intelligence about anticipated drivers of change and cultivate resources that enable association professionals to scan and find implications themselves. A primary objective is the ongoing identification of change drivers—indicators with underlying trends that may affect associations and even the industries and populations served by associations. For each change driver, the program will develop content that describes the implications and suggests potential actions. Ultimately, the program's mission is to generate tools and resources that empower association leaders to create a culture of foresight in their associations and that support their ability to make critical changes for their organization, their members, and our global community of associations.

Research Phases

The ForesightWorks research program methodology is organized around a keen understanding of areas of concern to associations, a systematic and intensive scanning of trends and issues, and careful analysis to identify drivers of change that could have significant impact. The research is performed by Signature i and the Foresight Alliance, consulting futures research firms with extensive experience across a range of associations and industries. An advisory group of association executives helps shape the program design and interpret the research.

The scanning research continually forecasts anticipated change that may have implications for associations. These drivers of change are described in action briefs—four-page resources that each describe one of the drivers of change—providing forecasts, data points, strategic insights, and action steps to help association leaders think through their own needs in relation to that change. The action briefs are intended to support, advance, and contextualize conversations about changes ahead for associations and the world of work more broadly. By engaging association executives in an analysis of the research, the ASAE Research Foundation will offer potential solutions and responses associations might consider.

The first round of research resulted in the identification of 41 drivers of change, released in March 2018. New drivers of change will be added each year. Five were added in August 2018, three will be added in June 2019, and an additional three were added in August 2019, bringing the total number of drivers to 50. (During updates, some drivers of change are dropped or rolled into others to maintain a total number of 50 drivers.) The foundation's future-focused research initiative continually scours the environment for drivers of change likely to affect associations and supports the application of foresight in association management.

Additional updates and new drivers of change are planned each year, including five new drivers in 2021. For 2021, Foresight Alliance is developing, among others, a new driver of change specific to the ways in which Covid-19 will drive change in the association world. Researchers will also do a thorough review of the drivers through the lens of 2020 shifts and events, including the effects of Covid-19, the growing racial justice movement, and the election and its aftermath.

All driver of change action briefs are reviewed at least annually and updated as needed in response to new information or shifting trends related to the change.

Research Outputs

The original research identified drivers of change important to associations. Each is described in an action brief that examines its implications and offers ideas for steps associations can take to respond to the trend.

ASAE ForesightWorks Complete Collection
Includes four-page action briefs for all current drivers of change and the user's guide.

ASAE ForesightWorks User's Guide
This resource provides direction for practicing foresight and exploring the action briefs, including worksheets, sample agendas, and other materials.

Why Associations Need Foresight
A research brief that introduces the program and suggests ways for leaders to think about and apply intelligence about drivers of change and conduct future-focused scanning on their own.

Sample selection of three action briefs
This sample set contains three action briefs made available free to ASAE members. With August 2021 updates, this set will updated to include "Algorithms and Rights," "Hybrid Meetings," and "A World Reshaped by COVID."

Drivers of Change: Summaries and Forecasts
Free to ASAE members, this PDF provides an introduction to the drivers of change. The PDF collects the first page—including summaries, forecasts, and key uncertainties—of all 50 action briefs.

Key Findings

The drivers of change explore accumulations of trends that will affect the future of associations and association management and define insights and action steps for leaders. In 2021, researchers from Foresight Alliance developed five new drivers of change:

- **American Instability**: The American system of rules-based democracy is under strain. Polarization and distrust are pushing that system beyond gridlock toward potential breakdown, in which laws are not followed, election results are rejected, and political violence occurs on a growing scale. This could create a more uncertain and insecure operating environment for associations and their members.

- **Changing Science**: Where and by whom the global scientific enterprise is being conducted is changing. New regions—especially East Asia—are developing research centers and funding science on the scale of traditional science hubs in the West, while in the West citizen science and DIY research are supplementing and challenging traditional scientific institutions. At the same time, falling trust and rising sociopolitical polarization are impacting science, while automation brings new changes and challenges.

- **Dismantling Systemic Racism**: In 2020, the spotlight expanded and intensified on racial justice issues in the United States and the world. Conversations about systemic racism were deliberately taken up in new spaces, including the workplace and across professional communities. Industries, professions, and organizations are exploring and implementing policies and programs to address racism, but change will be complex and fraught as implications are worked out on the ground. Driven by demography, law, and culture, the challenge to dismantle systemic racism will remain a standing issue within U.S. public discourse.

- **Evolving Cities**: Urban areas are changing under the influence of unfolding economic, environmental, technological, and social trends. COVID-19 has spawned many acute effects, some of which are proving persistent—especially those involving where people work. City shapes and density are shifting, but the appeal of cities—for economic, social, cultural, and other qualities—remains. Meanwhile, the effects of climate change on cities are becoming immediate rather than theoretical.

- **A World Reshaped by COVID**: As the worst pandemic in more than a century ebbs through the early 2020s, some of its effects will prove ephemeral, as deeply rooted habits and institutions return to their previous states, while other trends that have been kicked into higher gear will accelerate. Associations will face an evolving, patchwork environment of regressing and accelerating trends.

Researchers also updated 10 existing drivers of change to reflect developing or deepening shifts that affect the forecasts for those drivers:

- Climate Change Mitigation (was "Climate Change Resiliency")
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (was "Diversity and Inclusion")
- Empowered Women
- Healthcare Disruption
- Higher Education 3.0
- Hybrid Meetings (was "Virtualized Meetings")
- Immigration-Driven Demography
- Rejection of Expertise
- The Splintered Society
- Taming Big Tech (was "Taming Big Tech Dependency")

The user's guide and *Why Associations Need Foresight* outlines key steps for practicing foresight, including preparing, scanning, prioritizing, forecasting, visioning, planning, and acting. Further information about the drivers of change can be found on the ASAE ForesightWorks section of the ASAE website.

Effective Leadership Development

Primary Audience

AMEX grant administrators

ASAE Staff

Research Partners

A portion of this study was an evaluation for the Leadership Academy program, sponsored by a grant from AMEX. The remainder of the research, on the Diversity Executive Leadership Program (DELP), and the Future Leaders Conference, was conducted by ASAE

Research Sample

Participants in ASAE leadership programs

Members

Nonmembers with similar characteristics who had not participated in leadership programs

Research Objectives

This study, launched in December 2011, aimed to investigate the career development of members and nonmembers with similar characteristics to those who have participated in ASAE leadership programs. A survey was designed to assess the effectiveness of ASAE's leadership programs, including the Diversity Executive Leadership Program (DELP), Leadership Academy, and Future Leaders Conference. This study aimed to investigate the career development of members and nonmembers with similar characteristics to those who have participated in ASAE leadership programs.

The research served in part to fulfill grant reporting requirements for AMEX, who supported the Leadership Academy, but additional leadership questions were added to the study in order to assess the impact of all three programs on the career development of participants.

Research Phases

Three leadership program groups were considered: The Diversity Executive Leadership Program (DELP) (2001–2011), the Leadership Academy (2008–2010), and Future Leaders Conference attendees (2007–2011). Using demographics from these groups, a matched sample for each was created. A survey was developed and deployed to leadership program participants and the matched sample. Both ASAE members and nonmembers were included in the deployment.

An electronic survey was deployed via email in January 2012. Out of 14,693 successfully deployed surveys, 2,483 responses were gathered, resulting in a response rate of 16.9 percent. Eighty-one Future Leaders Conference attendees responded and 903 of the matched sample responded. Twenty-one DELPs (26 percent) responded and 350 of the matched sample responded.

Respondents were asked to describe any increases in position level or number of employees supervised over a five-year period. Respondents were also asked to rate how significant each of 23 developmental experiences were in helping advance their career on a scale of one to five, with five being very significant.

Research Outputs

Findings were reported to the DELP scholar group, and the results on the Leadership Development program were reported to AMEX in accordance with the specifications of the grant.

Key Findings

1. Leadership programs were shown to have a significant, positive impact on career advancement for participants.
   - Sixty-five percent of Future Leaders Conference attendees were promoted between 2006–2011, compared to 44 percent of the matched sample and 45 percent of overall respondents. Twenty-eight percent moved up one position level, and 37 percent moved up two or more.
   - Fifty-nine percent of DELP participants were promoted between 2006–2011, compared to 35 percent of the matched sample. Fifty percent moved up one level, and 9 percent moved up two position levels.
   - Fifty-five percent of DELP participants reported supervising additional employees between 2006–2011, compared to 47 percent of the matched sample. Fourteen percent of DELP participants reported supervising fewer employees, compared to 28 percent of the matched sample.
   - Ninety-two percent of Leadership Academy participant respondents reported moving up at least one position level in the past 5 years, compared to 56 percent of the matched sample.
   - Sixty-one percent of Leadership Academy participants reported having one or more additional employees, compared to 36 percent of the matched sample.

2. Leadership programs make a measurable difference. Leadership program participants rated developmental experiences higher than participants from the matched sample. Programs allowed access to more developmental experiences for participants (such as mentoring, attending educational programs, and attaining a certification).
Participants reported statistically higher levels of development versus nonparticipants:
   - attending professional education programs (4.10 v. 3.74)
   - participating in leadership programs (4.06 v. 3.36)
   - having a mentor (3.80 v. 3.48)
   - joining an association (3.70 v. 3.24)
   - attaining a certification (3.67 v. 3.08)
   - taking a leadership/personality assessment (3.41 v. 2.80)

This finding suggests that leadership programs do have a measurable impact on leadership development. DELP and Leadership Academy were cohort programs based on a small class size.

3. Study findings suggest that activities directly integrated into the day-to-day experience are a significant part of leadership development in the association profession. Study respondents who experienced a position promotion during the years 2009–2011 similarly reported statistically significant higher levels of development from training on-the-job (4.23), changing jobs (4.00), and having a mentor (3.60).

Across all respondents, the top three rated influences on career development were direct aspects of day-to-day experiences:

- learning from mistakes (4.37)
- learning from a good boss (4.32)
- training on the job (4.18)

4. Some generational differences do exist. Generation Xers and Millennials reported the same top three most significant experiences (learning from a good boss, learning from mistakes, and training on-the-job), however, there were five experiences that Millennials rated as more significant than Generation Xers:

- networking with higher-level professionals (3.98 v. 3.77)
- receiving an award/formal recognition (3.23 v. 2.84)
- volunteering in your profession (3.14 v. 2.80)
- volunteering in your community (3.04 v. 2.62)
- receiving scholarships/funding (2.95 v. 2.40)

Interim CEO and Executive Transitions: Performance and Competencies

Primary Audience

Senior Staff

Interim CEOs

Board Members

Research Partners

Vetted Solutions

Ancora Group

Research Sample

Previous Interim CEOs

Senior Staff Members

Board Members

Research Objectives

The study examines the use of interim CEOs in associations, with the goal of helping association executives, potential interim CEOs, and board leaders understand and make informed decisions about preparation and training, executive searches and transitions, succession planning, and interim CEO effectiveness.

Research Phases

Focus groups were conducted to find CEO preparation and training; executive searches transitions, and succession planning; and finally effective interim CEO effectiveness. These focus groups were used to create case studies that could be used for other associations considering using interim CEOs, and also provide a further glimpse into the role of interim CEO in leadership for associations. Case studies include interviews from a board member, a senior staff member, the interim CEO, and the subsequent CEO for each association, offering multiple perspectives on the impact and effectiveness of interim CEOs. Case study research of 15 organizations was completed.

Research Outputs

A complete report of findings is forthcoming. Key insights from the case studies have been compiled into a set of research briefs, *Effective Interim Transitions*, with takeaways for interim CEOs, subsequent CEOs, boards of directors and staff. The set of briefs will be shared in the foundation's resource area at the 2021 ASAE Annual Meeting.

Key Findings

Interim CEOs are advised to

- know the desired role
- set expectations
- focus on culture
- begin with a listening tour
- socialize change
- keep your hat out of the ring (usually)

Subsequent CEOs are advised to

- understand the role the interim played
- make the transition a true partnership

- be gentle with staff

Boards of directors are advised to

- hire an interim CEO
- make a plan
- set clear expectations
- look for valuable traits in an interim, including knowledge of association management, leadership experience, and emotional intelligence

Staff are advised to

- keep an open mind
- be ready for extra work
- get processes on paper
- be proactive
- accept that it's not your call

These takeaways are more fully described in the *Effective Interim Transitions* research briefs.

Associations as Catalysts: Industry and Profession-Focused Innovation

Primary Audience

Innovation professionals

CEOs

Board

Research Partners

Satish Nambisan, PhD

Research Sample

Innovation professionals

CEOs

Nonmembers

Research Objectives

The objective of this research initiative is to determine and define the culture and practices established by associations that are successful in fostering and sustaining external-industry focused innovation.

The outcomes of this research should be to help association CEOs, boards, and innovation staff examine their own organizations, identify factors that correlate with associations that have been more and less successful in this kind of innovation, and further work to shift their culture and operations to be set up for success.

Research Phases

The research consists of three major studies:

- Study 1: In-Depth Interviews of association executives.

- Study 2: Survey of Associations, a questionnaire-based survey to address the research questions.

- Study 3: Focus Groups.

Research Outputs

The primary deliverable will be a detailed research report that includes a review of the extant literature, research questions, study constructs and hypotheses, research methodology, findings and a set of best practices, written in a practitioner-friendly language and format so that it would be readily accessible to the broader association community.

Key Findings

The study is currently underway; key findings will be determined based on the completion of all research phases.

Innovation in Associations

Primary Audience Senior executives

Research Partners Satish Nambisan, PhD

Research Sample Senior executives
CEOs

Research Objectives

The objective of this research initiative was to describe the culture and processes established by associations that nurture innovation within organizations and among their members. Specifically, the Foundation sought to fund research leading to a greater understanding of how associations innovate given their unique qualities, and how associations foster innovation in their industry and among their members.

Research Phases

The research was conducted in three phases:

- interviews with senior level executives on the forefront of innovation, whose ideas and insights informed the creation of the survey deployed in the second phase of research
- a survey of senior level executives and CEOs to understand how their organizations practice innovation and what specific capabilities and practices enhance innovation success
- focus groups built from the survey findings to extrapolate key themes and develop recommendations for innovation strategies, programs, and practices in the association community.

Research Outputs

Associations Innovate: The Journey from Intent to Action (2018)
This report captures findings from the ASAE Research Foundation's Innovation in Associations study, exploring how different organizations across the association industry are approaching innovation. The report offers strategies and practices based on the research findings, as well as insights from association-tested practices, to help leaders advance innovation and innovative thinking in their organizations.

Key Findings

Many associations are performing well in some areas of innovation, but the research indicates that leaders have opportunities to broaden their scope. Association leaders often focus on developing a culture of innovation, but they don't give the same attention to developing innovation capabilities.

Associations that are committed to innovation are more likely to pursue certain strategies that lead to success, including planning and implementing innovation practices in a deliberate way, and consistently tracking efforts with specific metrics.

Association Content Strategies for a Changing World

Primary Audience
Association professionals

Research Partners
Dina Lewis, Distilled Logic
Hilary Marsh, Content Company
Carrie Hane, Tanzen

Research Sample
Association professionals

Research Objectives

For the purposes of this project, "content strategy" broadly comprised the planning and judgment for the creation, publication, dissemination, and governance of useful, usable content across departments and functional areas. For associations, these definitions encompass the ways associations develop, collect, coordinate, and transmit knowledge and content—including original publications, research findings, aggregated content, and professional development materials—related to their members' work, professions, or industries.

With that perspective in mind, this initiative examined the strategic integration, dissemination, and measurement of content by associations—that is, what is being done, how it is being coordinated and developed across channels, how it is being measured, and where that analysis is applied. The goal was to create research outcomes that inspire leaders to take a strategic approach to content, educate decision makers about content strategy best practices, and provide direction for aligning those practices with business goals.

Research Phases

Data was collected and analyzed across multiple phases: an environmental scan, a survey to establish profiles of content strategy usage and deployment, in-depth interviews about content strategy threats and challenges, and a second survey to further explore the association content strategy benchmarks.

Research Outputs

The foundation released the report _Association Content Strategies for a Changing World_ in June 2019.

Key Findings

Content strategy scales. Associations of all sizes and types are practicing content strategy. Neither staff size nor budget limit an organization's ability to develop and implement a content strategy. What matters more than size or budget is that an organization recognizes the need to have a plan for the creation, publication, dissemination, and governance of useful, usable, effective content.

Organizations create their own content strategy journeys. Content strategy is a set of practices rather than a single action or document, and many organizations integrate a number of content strategy practices into their work. While the research showed that certain tactics—including planning calendars, content audits, and taxonomies—are most widely practiced, associations generally incorporate tactics according to their objectives or pain points, or according to which team is driving the content strategy effort.

Culture and leadership matter. Association executives generally agree that content strategy is important—at least in theory. However, it's not enough to have a plan. Without buy-in, content strategy will not get very far.

Associations must overcome common content strategy challenges. These include departmental territoriality, lack of alignment across the organization, and barriers to data collection. Leaders must address these issues to implement an effective, holistic content strategy.

Current and Emerging Trends of Tradeshows

Primary Audience

Meeting planners

Exhibitors

Exhibition attendees

Buyers and sellers

Research Partners

[Rohit Verma, PhD](#)

Cornell Center for Hospitality Research (CHR)

Research Sample

Meeting planners

Exhibitors

Exhibition attendees

Buyers and sellers

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to examine the impact trends like social media and mobile technology, sustainability and social responsibility, and budgetary constraints have on association tradeshows. Researchers sought to generate findings useful to audiences including meeting planners and attendees, exhibitors, buyers, and sellers by identifying best practices, tradeoffs, constraints, and relative preferences. The study also sought to help association executives understand their tradeshow options at both the macro level (selection of geographical location, venue, and timing, for example) and the micro level (such as design of the convention facility or expo booth).

Research Phases

Phase I of the research kicked off in 2011 with an initial review of practitioner and academic publications related to tradeshows, followed by two focus groups with participants representing various associations, CVBs, meeting organizers, and meeting attendees. Interviews were then conducted with destination/lodging executives, meeting planners, exhibitors, and attendees.

Results of the first phase demonstrated that a tradeshow's success depends on multiple criteria, but the goal, as in any other business, is to maximize the return on investment for all stakeholders. Of course, smaller details—such as a great facility, food, or location—will affect attendees' experience, but ultimately four major factors contribute to the ideal tradeshow experience for both exhibitors and attendees:

- organization from an attendee's point of view
- location of the tradeshow
- successful booth-design layouts
- consideration of how to improve the tradeshow experience

Phase II of the research began in summer 2012 with a survey of exhibitors and attendees of tradeshows. The survey resulted in 2,527 responses, 674 among tradeshow exhibitors and 1,853 among attendees.

Research Outputs

The research report *Current and Emerging Trends of Tradeshows: An Assessment of Stakeholders' Preferences (2014)* details the findings of the research study.

Key Findings

- Research indicated that substantial differences often exist between exhibitors and attendees in terms of their reasons for attendance, costs associated with attendance, the usage and preferences for technology, scheduling and sustainability options, the relative importance of criteria for tradeshow selection, and relative utilities of various tradeshow attributes.

- Collectively, these results suggest that these are two fundamentally different groups. However, the presence of both groups is essential for a successful tradeshow. Therefore, the organizers of a tradeshow have the difficult task of managing the needs and expectations of both.

- The data also yielded notable commonalities, the most apparent being the measured importance of high-quality educational programming to both exhibitors and attendees.

- Further analysis of results indicated that all criteria related to the speakers, topics of talks and education are, generally speaking, heavily weighted for both groups suggesting that associations should continue to associate tradeshows in combination with their annual meetings or conferences for better attendance. Since educational components are positively viewed by both attendees and exhibitors, they may provide opportunities for better satisfying the needs of the two groups.

- Because there are so many variables associated with a tradeshow and an attendee or exhibitor's decision to attend—and the preferences of the two groups could be influenced by environmental changes, e.g., technological enhancements, recession—continued monitoring of the preferences is warranted.

The Future of Membership

Primary Audience
Membership professionals
CEOs

Research Partners
Association Laboratory
Avenue M Group
The Haefer Group Ltd.
University of North Texas

Research Sample
Membership professionals
CEOs

Research Objectives

To understand trends and changes related to the future of association membership, the ASAE Research Foundation solicited research proposals to provide answers to these key questions:

- What are the disruptive innovations in other forms of affiliation that are proving to be viable solutions for people seeking to identify with groups and advance their interests?

- How will engagement behaviors of individuals and organizations be affected in the future by the economic environment?

- What is the nature of community, and what roles are the "associations of the future" uniquely positioned to serve?

Research Phases

The Foundation accepted proposals from four research teams, each of which did a separate project to examine the research questions.

The second phase of the program was a retreat, where the grant recipients presented on their findings to a group of association chief executives and membership professionals. Attendees then participated in facilitated discussions. Themes that emerged from this portion of the research were synthesized in a final report.

Research Outputs

The four research projects each resulted in a white paper:

The Future of Association Engagement, by Association Laboratory, an analysis of environmental scanning results and data collected from 33 discussions with association leaders to examine the impact of macro forces and large scale social change on organizational and individual membership decisions.

Innovations in Membership Engagement: A Benchmarking Study, by Avenue M Group identified five key factors that organizations with successful and innovative membership models took into account to make successful membership strategy changes.

New Realities Existing Within Converging Trends: The Future Is Now, by the Haefer Group, Ltd. and Blanken Consulting/Results Technology, Inc., focused on the value proposition of the future of membership organizations and identified six "new realities" for associations to understand and address in order to engage their membership.

How Can Professional Associations Provide Meaningful Value for Their Members: Creating Models of Affiliation and Engagement, by the Department of Public Administration, University of North Texas, asked doctoral students about their choices to engage with associations now and what would influence their choice to do so in the future.

Exploring the Future of Membership (2014)
The key themes of the research were consolidated into this report. Key themes emerged from a workshop where researchers presented their findings and association chief executives and membership professionals participated in facilitated discussions.

Key Findings

The major themes that emerged from these discussions were:
- meeting members where they are
- engaging influencers
- changing roles and responsibilities
- curation of information and data
- tackling obstacles that prevent associations from getting better

The Decision to Join

Primary Audience	Research Partners	Research Sample
CEOs C-Suite Membership professionals	James Dalton Monica Dignam	Members of cosponsoring associations

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to create a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the motivations of members and potential members—the perceived value of belonging and the benefits that are most important to them. The researchers focused on discovering what motivates people to join an association—or not, based on measures such as affiliation and involvement, generation and career level, gender, employer type and level of support, and location.

Research Phases

This study surveyed nearly 17,000 individuals who were current members of associations, former members, or had never been members. Researchers asked questions in three primary areas. First, they focused on factors that contributed to the predisposition to join, and how that differed according to member status (member, former member, or never member). The second part asked value questions specifically about the sponsoring association that provided their names for the survey. The final part of the study collected demographic data on respondents. The data and analysis were compiled in the book *The Decision to Join: How Individuals Determine Value and Why They Choose to Belong*.

Research Outputs

The Decision to Join: How Individuals Determine Value and Why They Choose to Belong (2007) This book compiles the results and insights from the Decision to Join study.

Supporting the Decision to Join: What Association Boards Should Know and Do About Membership and Affiliation (2009) This publication is comprised of the data from the 2007 study that most directly addresses issues with board-level implications.

10 Lessons for Cultivating Member Commitment: Critical Strategies for Fostering Value, Involvement, (2012) This book pulls out key points from the Decision to Join studies (2007 and 2012) and resulting books and conveys in a succinct format practical actions that associations can take to keep members engaged in their associations.

Key Findings

Key Takeaways from The Decision to Join
- The association industry has high perceived value, with the highest value perceived by current members.
- Half of association members drop their enrollment due to life and career changes. The other half drops for various reasons.
- Perception of value rises with level of involvement, to the extent that those at the governance level have a different view of value than rank and file members. For example, leaders often give low importance ratings to benefits that young people give high importance to.
- Association members value both personal benefits and overall benefits to the industry, ranking benefits to the industry slightly higher.

Key Takeaways from Supporting the Decision to Join
- Member involvement is an important driver of loyalty and should be included as a performance metric.

- Board members should understand that their views may differ from those of rank and file members, especially on the relative importance of perceived value.

Key Takeaways from 10 Lessons for Cultivating Member Commitment
- Remember the importance of emphasizing the community aspect of membership, not just the more transactional benefits.
- Focus on cultivating involvement with new members to instill member loyalty.
- Engage the next generation.
- Help board members and other volunteer leaders understand that their priorities can often be different that those of rank and file members.

The Benefits of Credentialing Programs to Membership Associations

Primary Audience		Research Partners		Research Sample	
	Credentialing managers Association leaders		North Carolina State University Institute for Nonprofits		Credentialing managers Association leaders

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to examine the benefits of credentialing programs to the associations that administer them. Researchers sought to understand how leaders of associations with credentialing programs and managers of credentialing programs perceived the value and benefits of credentialing programs to their associations and to the members who obtain the credentials.

Research Phases

Researchers conducted two surveys. The first asked 126 association leaders questions about credentialing programs as a whole. The second asked 228 managers of credentialing programs questions about specific credentials. The survey results were analyzed and compiled in a comprehensive report.

Research Outputs

The research report *The Benefits of Credentialing Programs to Membership Associations* details the findings of the research study. The findings showed strong perceptions that credentials offered both direct and indirect value to members.

Key Findings

Certain themes emerged in the findings. There were many perceived benefits to credentialing programs, according to respondents.
- Credentialing programs provide value to both members and employers.
- Offering a credentialing program can raise the image of a profession by increasing visibility to the public and a perception of legitimacy that can improve access to advocacy efforts.
- Members that held credentials were seen to be more engaged.
- The more difficult a credential was to earn, the higher its perceived value was.

The Decision to Learn

| Primary Audience | CEOs C-Suite Education/learning professionals | Research Partners | Lillie R. Albert, PhD Monica Dignam | Research Sample | Members of cosponsoring associations |

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research were to understand the motives of association members to participate in learning activities. Researchers sought to identify learning behaviors, preferences, and potential trends for associations to watch in the comprehensive study.

Research Phases

The research was based on a survey of association members, asking them a range of questions about their demographics, professional education experiences, and learning preferences and motivations as they related to professional development. This survey was one of the most comprehensive to date of association members and their desire to participate in professional development. The results were analyzed and compiled in *The Decision to Learn.*

Research Outputs

The Decision to Learn (2010)
This book compiles the findings from the study, offering key insights into learners' needs and preferences, their actions, and the influences that demographic characteristics and other factors have on the continuing education choices individuals make.

Key Findings

- Association members are active learners—the majority of participants had participated in at least one activity designed to advance their professional standing in the prior year.
- Access to professional education programs is an important benefit of association membership.
- Association learners strongly prefer in-person learning, although they will participate in distance learning.
- A sense of affiliation with an association is the strongest predictor of attendance in association learning programs.
- Younger members have different motivations to learn.
- Respondents want to learn from practitioners.

CEO Pathways and Compensation

Primary Audience	C-Suite HR professionals Job seekers Industry consultants	
Research Partners	Naylor Association Solutions	
Research Sample	Trade and professional associations with paid full-time staff	

Research Objectives

The CEO Pathways and Compensation research aimed to identify common pathways to obtaining an association CEO position, and the experiences that were crucial during the development of current association leaders. Researchers also looked at compensation and benefits for chief executives in recent years, and what external factors affect their compensation.

Research Phases

The research took data from ASAE's *Association Compensation and Benefits Study* on CEO salary and benefits data, identifying how factors like association type, size, location, and scope impact salary and benefits. The study also included an analysis of how CEO compensation and benefits had changed in the 71 organizations that participated in 2012, 2014, and 2016.

Research Outputs

Three research briefs were created during this project:

Pathways to CEO Success: How Experience, Learning, and Networks Shape Association CEO Careers (2016) This brief examined the different educational and professional experiences of association CEOs.

CEO Salary Dynamics: Changes in Association Chief Executive Base Salaries from 2012 to 2016 (2016) Based on data from ASAE's *Association Compensation and Benefits Study,* this report looks at how factors like association type, size, location, and scope affect median base salary for chief executives.

Key Findings

Key Takeaways from Pathways to CEO Success:
- CEOs do not follow a single path to get to their position—they came from within the industry they represented, from other associations, and from other fields.
- CEOs had a range of educational levels, though most had a university degree.
- Association CEOs had experience in a variety of functional areas prior to becoming CEOs.
- Cultivating an informal professional network was given the highest overall rating in terms of professional development activities that contributed to achieving a CEO position.
- CEO compensation and benefits are on the rise, beyond the pace of inflation.
- Median CEO salaries grew the most in trade associations.
- CEO salaries grew the most in the metropolitan areas of Washington, DC, New York City, and Chicago.

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Workforce Development

Primary Audience

CEOs

Research Partners

NORC at the University of Chicago

Research Sample

Association executives

Professional development staff

Managers and employees via NORC AmeriSpeak online panel

Research Objectives

This study was designed to fill gaps in the available literature about the role of associations in workforce development. Researchers also tested hypotheses to determine the value of associations in workforce development. The research should provide critical business intelligence on training market forces and consumers for use by the association management community.

The broad goals of the study are to define characteristics of association-sponsored training, determine the benefits of such training as perceived by managers and employees, discover and describe current market forces in training and education, and explore the full range of skills training. Research has concluded; content creation is underway.

Research Phases

Research began with a comprehensive literature review. A SWOT analysis of the information collected in that phase identified significant themes impacting the workforce, including: technology and automation, the gig economy, the skills gap, and evolution of learning models.

The next phase, launched mid-2018, surveyed a diverse group of association professionals on their organization's workforce development offerings, use of technology, and skills development training. The survey instrument was developed from the environmental scan findings, revised based on volunteer task force feedback, and finalized after a series of member cognitive tests.

The final phases of research, launched concurrently late 2018, set out to understand how association workforce development programs are perceived by managers and their employees. The survey asked participants about their awareness of training programs offered by associations, how costs are covered, and what types of skills employers might be looking for associations to develop. NORC conducted this survey using the AmeriSpeak Panel, a nationally representative panel of households in the United States designed for government and academic research.

Results of all surveys and the environmental scan were used to develop a Workforce Development Maturity Model; interviews with association workforce development and training staff were conducted to inform case studies of successful associations.

Resource Guide of Industry and Market Research Initiatives

Research Outputs

The research project deliverables include:

- Association Report Workforce Development Research
- Case Study Report Workforce Development Research
- Employee Report Workforce Development Research
- Manager Report Workforce Development Research
- Maturity Model Workforce Development Research
- The Role of Associations in Workforce Development (introduction to research)

Key Findings

Some key findings include:

- The importance of types of training and modes, by employees, managers, association professionals
  - From an association professional perspective, percentage who rated the importance of types of training:
    - Industry-specific or profession-specific training: technical (84%)
    - Industry-specific or profession-specific training: non-technical (69%)
    - Management training (67%)
- What employees think as to the value of association-provided workforce development from an experience and importance perspective:
  - Importance of quality of association-based offerings according to employee-level respondents
  - From an employee experience perspective, the percentage citing as good/very good/excellent (Top 3 offerings shown)
    - Instructor-led training (93%)
    - Access to industry standards or other content (92%)
    - Self-directed learning opportunities (91%)
  - From an employee importance perspective, the percentage citing as very/extremely important in their decision to join an association (Top 3 offerings shown)
    - Career pathway development (55%)
    - Access to experts in the industry or profession (50%)
    - Self-directed learning opportunities (50%)

The Informed Association

Primary Audience

Association professionals interested in and/or conducting research

Research Partners

N/A

Research Sample

N/A

Research Objectives

The objective of this work was to help association professionals understand the importance of data-based decision making, the limitations of data, how to ask the right questions in research, and how to gather data in a way that will be meaningful and useful.

Research Phases

A series of authors used the literature to address how associations can use appropriate research methods to prioritize investments and position their associations in an ever-growing complex environment.

Research Outputs

The Informed Association: A Practical Guide to Using Research for Results
This book outlines the essential research principles to consider from research design to implementation, and tools to create a well thought out research plan. This resource provides detailed definitions, example charts, and case studies throughout to help illustrate how associations can and have used research to help move themselves forward in an everyday environment.

Key Findings

Main topics covered:
- why we use data to make decisions
- when to say "no" to a research project
- how to manage the research process internally or through a vendor
- how to create and develop a research plan to guide a project
- choosing what collection methods work and how to determine and recruit the survey audience
- the ethical issues that arise when conducting research
- how to analyze and interpret data results
- identifying common pitfalls and errors to avoid
- which medium is best for conveying results to an audience

Responsible Conduct of Research

Primary Audience
CEOs
C-Suite
Research Teams

Research Partners
McKinley Advisors

Research Sample
Association executives from organizations that conduct research

Research Objectives
The objective of this work was to provide guidelines on the role associations should play in the area of ethical research, including opportunities to promote integrity in your members' research and your association's research.

Research Phases
Association executives from the healthcare, science, and engineering sectors participated in one-on-one interviews to describe their perspectives on the roles and responsibilities associations may assume in promoting research integrity.

Research Outputs
Responsible Conduct of Research: The Roles Associations Play in Promoting Research Integrity (2015) This report provided research outputs around opportunities to promote integrity in members' research in the areas of:
- human subject research
- animal subject research
- conflicts of interest
- authorship and publication
- data management
- research misconduct

This report also provided key takeaways around opportunities to promote integrity in research conducted by associations and research sponsored by associations.

Key Findings
Associations should first consider a variety of factors before embarking on research initiatives such as:
- alignment of issue with mission and strategy
- market demand for resource(s)
- program benefits and liabilities
- resources provided by external sources (e.g., the Office of Research Integrity)
- resource requirements (financial and staff resources, expertise, information technology)

Technology Success Study

Primary Audience
Senior technology decision makers

Research Partners
DelCor Technology Solutions
Rockbridge Associates

Research Sample
IT professionals

Research Objectives

The ASAE Research Foundation pursued this research to fill a gap in existing content related to associations and technology. The goals were to measure the "technology readiness" of association members and conduct audits of "IT maturity" within association staff teams. With the results of the research, the Foundation intended to create resources that would help association leaders understand the technology-related needs and preferences of their members and achieve an effective and sustainable internal technology culture.

Research Phases

The ASAE Research Foundation and DelCor Technology Solutions launched the Technology Success and Readiness Study in 2015 to gain a greater understanding of technology usage and opportunity in the association sector. The study gathered data in four phases:
1. Exploratory phase: identified issues and opportunities associations face in IT strategy. This phase included two focus groups and 11 in-depth interviews with senior information technology decision makers.
2. Case studies: an in-depth analysis of critical success factors for association IT delivery based on a detailed study of seven ASAE member associations.
3. Association member survey: a survey of a broadly representative sample of association members across 14 organizations that shared their lists. A total of 3,496 completed all or most of the survey questions.
4. Sector survey: a national survey of association IT leaders on the IT maturity of their association, capturing responses from 277 association IT decision makers.

Research Outputs

Findings from the First Phase of ASAE Research Foundation's Technology Success Study (2015) This research brief captures the findings from the first phase of Tech Success Study research. These findings served as the foundation for the full research study and the development of the Technology Readiness Assessment. The PDF can be found on this page.

Tech Success for Associations: Balancing IT Maturity, Readiness, and Expectations for a Satisfying, Sustainable Future (2016) This report synthesizes key findings from phases two, three, and four of the Tech Success Study. Includes analyses of results and conclusions from the association member survey, the association IT leader survey, and the case studies.

Technology Readiness Assessment (2017) ASAE's Technology Readiness Assessment is hosted on the *AssociaMetrics* platform. The 31 questions on four major technology-

component areas (data, management and strategy, infrastructure, and digital presence) used in the Tech Success Study survey were transformed into an assessment that allows leaders to identify their organization's strengths and weaknesses. Upon completion, the assessment provides results on an organization's overall IT maturity score and performance scores in each of the component areas.

Key Findings

- In an assessment of their organizational IT maturity, most of the participating associations were rated as effective in their technology system maintenance and deployment.
- A majority of member respondents said they were highly satisfied with the way their association uses technology, but a majority of members say that there is room for associations to expand their technology capabilities.
- Millennials are most likely to be dissatisfied with their associations' technology offerings and assert that association capabilities should be expanded.
- Association members rate themselves at higher levels of technology fluency and optimism than the U.S. population—and at higher levels than association technology decision makers give them credit for.
- More than three quarters of association members expressed comfort in using technology, and a third consider themselves early adopters. Organizations must consider how to balance the expectations of these members while continuing to support members who are less techno-ready.
- Members want access to relevant content, online learning, professional networks, and self-service systems, and they need to be able to get that access through a variety of devices, including smartphones and tablets. The sector's maturity in these areas is decidedly mixed.
- Technology success divides around demographics. Associations with larger budgets, who have more to spend on technology and are more likely to have IT staff focused on technology success, are most successful in technology integration and management. Professional associations tend to have more mature levels of technology integration and management than trade associations or associations that have a membership that includes both organizations and individual members.
- Association members expect technology to support and enhance all aspects of their member experience. For associations to address that effectively, technology decision making, and strategic decision making must go hand in hand. Associations need to collect information from key stakeholders and technology users, including members, to understand what the needs are— not only today but also in the years ahead.

Cybersecurity

C-Suite
IT professionals
Board members

SCIPP International
Colleen Ryan Leonard

IT professionals

Research Objectives

This short research project explored how associations are preparing for cyberattacks and sought to describe the processes and actions that can help them improve their defenses.

Research Phases

A series of focus groups were convened that built on the findings of SCIPP International's 2015 survey study. The conversations suggested that further research was not required, but that ASAE could provide other resources and learning opportunities to advance association leaders' knowledge about risks and preparedness.

Research Outputs

Association Data Breach Preparedness: Summary of Qualitative Findings on Status and Needs (2017) This report focuses on what association executives and IT leaders are doing to prevent cyberattacks.

The PDF can be found on this page.

Key Findings

Findings suggest that cybersecurity audits are an effective way to offset the risk of a data breach, but also that associations need to be prepared in the eventuality of one—both from a liability and a damage control plan perspective.

Global Maturity Assessment

Primary Audience
U.S.-based organizations that are engaged in or interested in global expansion

Research Partners
MCI Group
Rockbridge Associates, Inc.

Research Sample
CEOs
C-Suite
Global association leaders

Research Objectives

The Global Maturity Assessment was developed through a collaboration between ASAE Research Foundation and the MCI Group, with research provided by Rockbridge Associates, In. Hosted on ASAE's AssociaMetrics platform, the assessment is a sophisticated tool for association leaders to determine effectiveness in seven component sections:

- strategic and business planning
- management and organizational culture
- leadership engagement
- market insight
- value proposition and engagement model
- global organization, roles, and support
- local operations and service delivery capacity

The ASAE's Global Maturity Assessment, *Global Maturity Assessment* (2017), can be used annually to assess your organization's readiness and capacity for global operations against validated effective practice. The tool is designed to determine an organization's global maturity level and assess its state of readiness – culturally, managerially, and operationally.

Research Phases

The Global Maturity Assessment was scientifically validated to ensure that it accurately captured the relevant constructs, met accepted standards for reliability and stability, and was a valid measure of global success. Questions were developed based on qualitative research by the ASAE Research Foundation and the MCI Group. All metrics were assessed using cognitive interviews, and the instrument was administered to 90 executives from associations at various stages of global deployment. The instrument was then validated using factor analysis to assess organization, Cronbach Alphas to assess scale reliability, and correlation analysis to ensure global maturity scores track with relevant success metrics, including satisfaction, growth, and problem incidence.

Research Outputs

Based on ASAE Research Foundation research, the Global Maturity Assessment guides you through 47 questions to obtain your organization's overall global maturity score, along with effectiveness scores in the seven major global-readiness areas listed above.

After completion of the assessment, an organization obtains a concise report articulating the meaning of the scores, areas of success and opportunity, and links to supportive resources. Reports result in scores for all readiness areas, and areas of success and opportunity. Assessment takers receive results that show their association's level of readiness and compare them to benchmark data from the research.

Key Findings

Assessment results will vary by organization. The assessment questionnaire is organized as follows:

- Stage of International Operations
- Global Development Strategy
    - o Strategic and Business Planning
    - o Management and Organizational Culture
    - o Leadership Engagement
- Current Demand
    - o Market Insight
- Product Relevance
    - o Value Proposition and Engagement Model
- Operations
    - o Global Organization, Roles and Support
    - o Local Operations and Service Delivery Capacity

Technology Readiness Assessment

Primary Audience
Trade associations, Individual membership organizations

Research Partners
DelCor Technologies, Rockbridge Associates

Research Sample
CIOs, CTOs, Association IT leaders and decision makers

Research Objectives

CIOs within associations are increasingly engaged in broader organizational questions, as technological developments have become a primary component of many associations' operations and strategies. The Technology Readiness Assessment *(2017),* helps an association to assess its technology readiness and IT maturity against validated effective practice in four major technology-component areas:

- data
- management and strategy
- infrastructure
- digital presence

Research Phases

The study gathered data in four phases:

- Exploratory phase: Identified issues and opportunities associations face in IT strategy. This phase included two focus groups and 11 in-depth interviews with senior information technology decision makers.
- Case studies: An in-depth analysis of critical success factors for association IT delivery based on a detailed study of seven ASAE member associations.
- Association member survey: A survey of a broadly representative sample of association members across 14 organizations that shared their lists. A total of 4,831 association members began the survey, and 3,496 (72 percent) completed the bulk of the questions.
- Sector survey: A national survey of association IT leaders on the IT maturity of their association, capturing responses from 277 association IT decision makers (9 percent of the 3,036 surveyed).

The Technology Readiness Assessment was scientifically validated to ensure it covered relevant issues, met accepted standards for reliability and stability, and was a valid measure of technology success. The instrument was validated using factor analysis to assess questionnaire organization, Cronbach Alphas to assess scale reliability, and correlation analysis to ensure IT maturity scores track with satisfaction outcomes.

Research Outputs

The tool guides an organization through 31 questions to obtain the organization's overall technology readiness score. After completion of the assessment, an organization will receive its overall IT Maturity score and scores for four major technology component areas—data, management and strategy, infrastructure, and digital presence. In addition to the scores against validated practice, an organization receives a comparison report against the collected pool of data. Results are saved to compare over time to easily identify areas where improvements have been made as well as areas of opportunity.

Key
Findings

Individual assessment results will vary by organization. However, broadly, IT maturity can be understood as a continuum that exists across four stages, each defined by specific characteristics:

- Restrictive: Technology sometimes causes more harm than good. Web resources lack interactivity, data are decentralized, infrastructure is unstable, technology lacks a strategic outlook, and support is reactive.
- Functional: Technology works but lacks integration and automation. Website integration is limited, pockets of data are not integrated, IT planning is sporadic, and IT support is limited.
- Effective: Technology is more than an operational tool. Technology supports the organization's mission by adding value to the member, volunteer, donor, and constituent experience. Main operations systems are integrated with the website, databases are centralized, infrastructure provides a guaranteed uptime service level agreement (SLA), planning is annual, and support is proactive. Staff will experiment with social media.
- Innovative: Technology is used strategically to meet members' existing needs and anticipate future needs. The association has well-defined strategies for its website, social media, and mobile engagement. Data are used for business intelligence and drive decisions, infrastructure incorporates fringe technologies, and IT is a critical partner in advancing the mission and ensuring constituent service.