State of Associations Quarterly: 2025 Q3

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Key findings

- **Median planned dues increase for fiscal year 2026: 3.8 percent**, among organizations planning any increase at all.
- **61 percent of responding organizations plan a dues increase** for FY2026; the remaining 39 percent plan flat dues for at least another year.
- Organizations that have held dues flat since before 2023 plan the largest single-year increases — a median of 5.1 percent, against 3.2 percent for organizations that have raised dues at least once in the last three years.
- Only 34 percent of organizations planning an increase had communicated it to members in writing at the time of the survey, despite most FY2026 fiscal years beginning within six months.

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Why this brief, and why July

July sits in the middle of most nonprofit fiscal-year planning calendars — early enough that a board hasn't finalized next year's budget, late enough that dues committees are actively working the question. NANA's research team timed this brief deliberately to catch that window, on the theory that a dues committee mid-decision is more useful to survey than one reporting a number already locked in.

Director of Research Inês Carvalho-Reyes said the brief exists partly to answer a question NANA's own board has been asking about its own dues. "Individual dues have held at $195 since 2023. Whether we move to tiered organization dues is genuinely open. This brief doesn't answer that question for our board, but it tells us what the rest of the sector is actually doing while we're asking it."

What the data shows

Sixty-one percent of responding organizations plan a dues increase for fiscal year 2026, and among that group, the median planned increase is 3.8 percent. The remaining 39 percent plan to hold dues flat for at least another year, most commonly citing a recent increase already absorbed by members or a board reluctant to raise dues during a year of flat membership growth.

The 3.8 percent median sits above general inflation expectations cited by responding organizations, which the research team reads as boards catching up on deferred increases rather than tracking cost growth in real time.

Who's raising dues, and by how much

Organizations planning the largest increases are disproportionately those that have held dues flat the longest. Organizations that haven't raised dues since before 2023 plan a median increase of 5.1 percent for FY2026, compared to 3.2 percent among organizations that have raised dues at least once in the last three years.

> Boards that raise dues every year or two treat it as routine, and members experience it that way too. Boards that wait three or four years between increases end up needing a bigger jump to catch up, and that bigger number is a harder conversation with the board and with members both. > — Inês Carvalho-Reyes, Director of Research

Organization size showed little relationship to planned increase size once prior-increase timing was accounted for — a finding that surprised the research team going in, given the common assumption that smaller organizations raise dues more reluctantly than larger ones.

The flat-dues catch-up effect

The gap between recently-adjusted and long-flat organizations — 3.2 percent versus 5.1 percent — suggests that regular, smaller dues increases produce less budget disruption than infrequent, larger ones, even though the total increase over a multi-year period may be similar either way. A board that raises dues 2 percent annually for three years reaches roughly the same cumulative level as a board that holds flat for three years and then raises dues once by 6 percent, but members experience the first path as routine and the second as a shock.

Carvalho-Reyes's team plans to track this specific pattern across future editions of this brief, testing whether organizations that adopt an annual or biennial dues-review cadence report smaller member pushback than organizations that revisit dues only when budget pressure forces the question.

Communicating an increase before the invoice arrives

Only 34 percent of organizations planning a dues increase had communicated it to members in writing at the time of the survey, despite most FY2026 fiscal years beginning within six months of the July fielding date. The research team flags this as the brief's most actionable finding for membership staff: a dues increase members learn about only when their renewal invoice arrives generates more inbound questions and complaints than one communicated in advance, even when the increase itself is modest.

Organizations that had already communicated an increase most commonly did so through a board-signed letter explaining the reason for the increase — rising program costs, a facilities change, or a multi-year catch-up — rather than a bare notice of the new dues figure alone.

What NANA's own board is watching

NANA's own Dues Model Study, now in its second phase piloting new models at twelve member organizations, sits alongside this brief's findings as a live example of the same question many respondents are working through. Treasurer Haruko Tanaka's team continues to track pilot results ahead of a June 2027 results webinar, and this brief's finding that regular, smaller increases generate less friction than infrequent, larger ones is one input the study's own respondent organizations may weigh as they consider tiered or value-based alternatives to a flat annual increase.