State of Associations 2025

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Key findings

- **720 member organizations completed the survey**, up from 690 in 2024, fielded with Fieldstone Data Partners between October and December 2024.
- **Median membership growth held at 2.1 percent**, unchanged from the 2024 edition.
- **Median renewal held at 93 percent** for the second consecutive year.
- Non-dues revenue made up a median of **26 percent of operating budget**, up two points from 24 percent in 2024.
- Median annual staff turnover was **13 percent**, down from 14 percent in 2024.
- **64 percent of responding organizations** report a board-approved strategic plan, up from 61 percent.

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Why a repeated number is still news

A growth figure that repeats for a second year invites two different readings: either the sector

has found a plateau, or 2.1 percent is simply where a stable, mature field of member organizations sits year over year. Director of Research Inês Carvalho-Reyes said the research team isn't ready to call it either one.

"Two years at the same number doesn't tell you whether growth has stalled or whether 2.1 percent is just where this sector sits right now," Carvalho-Reyes said. "We'll know more after a third data point." That third point arrives with the 2026 edition, already in the field as this report goes to print.

How the survey was fielded

NANA fielded the 2025 survey with Fieldstone Data Partners between October and December 2024, using the same methodology as the 2024 edition: self-reported figures cross-checked against publicly available Form 990 data where an organization had filed one, with unvalidated responses excluded rather than adjusted.

The sample grew from 690 organizations in 2024 to 720 in 2025, an increase Carvalho-Reyes attributed to expanded outreach to smaller chapter-affiliated organizations rather than to any change in NANA's own membership. Respondents again span eleven sectors, three staff-size bands, and NANA's six chapter regions. All results in this report are aggregated; no individual respondent's data is identifiable.

The headline numbers

Median membership growth across the 720 responding organizations was 2.1 percent, identical to the 2024 figure. Median renewal was 93 percent, also unchanged. CEO Walter Abernathy, who co-authored this edition, said the flat trend line is worth taking at face value rather than treating as either good or bad news on its own.

"A 93 percent renewal rate next to 2.1 percent growth tells a board its association isn't shrinking, but it also isn't expanding the way some boards assume it should," Abernathy said. "This report exists so a board can plan against the real number instead of an aspirational one."

For a 400-member trade association, 2.1 percent growth works out to roughly eight net new members a year — enough to offset ordinary attrition, but not enough on its own to fund a new program without also raising dues or non-dues revenue.

Growth and renewal by sector

As in 2024, growth varied more by sector than by any other measured variable. Health care and education associations again reported the highest median growth, both above 3 percent, while manufacturing and shipping-sector associations reported growth closer to flat, in the 0.5 to 1.5 percent range. Renewal rates showed less sector spread, clustering between 90 and 95 percent across all eleven sectors, consistent with the 2024 pattern.

Growth and renewal by staff size

Organizations with fewer than ten staff again reported the widest spread in both growth and renewal, with some of the fastest- and slowest-growing organizations in the sample both drawn from this band. Mid-sized organizations, staffed between ten and twenty-five, clustered closest to the sample median on both measures. Organizations with more than twenty-five staff reported the most consistent renewal, typically within two points of the 93 percent median.

Growth and renewal by region

Matching NANA's six chapter footprints, the Southeast and Pacific Northwest regions again reported the highest median growth, both above the 2.1 percent overall figure — consistent with the Southeast chapter's continued growth in member organizations. The Great Lakes and Rocky Mountain regions reported growth closer to the median. Renewal held consistent across all six regions, varying by less than three points from the sample-wide figure.

Staff turnover

Median annual staff turnover across the sample was 13 percent, down a point from 14 percent in 2024. As in the prior edition, turnover concentrated most heavily in membership and events roles — the positions most directly exposed to renewal-cycle and meeting-season workload spikes. Organizations reporting turnover above 20 percent were again disproportionately likely to also report renewal below the sample median, though the survey cannot establish which factor drives the other.

Non-dues revenue

Non-dues revenue — sponsorship, event registration net of direct costs, certification fees, and product sales, among other sources — made up a median of 26 percent of total budget, up from 24 percent in 2024. Organizations with an annual conference or trade show again reported the widest range, with non-dues revenue above 35 percent of budget common among that group, while organizations without a signature annual event reported closer to 11 percent.

Strategic planning

Sixty-four percent of responding organizations reported a current, board-approved strategic plan, up from 61 percent in 2024. Organizations with a plan again reported higher median growth — 2.7 percent, against 1.5 percent for organizations without one — though the survey measures association rather than causation, and the research team is careful not to claim the plan itself drives the growth.

How to use this report

NANA's guidance to members reading this report is unchanged from prior editions: find your sector and staff-size band, then compare your own renewal and growth figures against the median for that group rather than the headline number for all 720 organizations. A national median of 2.1 percent growth means little to a manufacturing-sector association if that sector's median is running closer to zero, and just as little to a health care association whose sector is growing at 3 percent or better.

Executive directors at smaller organizations should pay particular attention to the staff-size bands in the growth and renewal sections, since the spread within that band is wide enough that a single year's number can move sharply on a handful of large-account gains or losses. The size-banded benchmark controls for that volatility better than the topline median does.

What comes next

NANA will field the State of Associations 2026 survey on the same October-to-December schedule, again in partnership with Fieldstone Data Partners, with results expected in March 2026. The research team plans to examine acquisition channels specifically in that edition, building on this year's finding that flat growth is driven more by the pace of new-member

acquisition than by member loss, given renewal's continued strength at 93 percent.

The State of Associations Quarterly series continues to track individual themes from the annual survey in shorter data briefs released each January, April, July, and October, giving members a benchmark refresh between annual editions rather than waiting a full year for a single snapshot.

A note on the three-year trend

This is the second consecutive year NANA has reported the same 2.1 percent median growth figure, and the research team is deliberately cautious about what two identical data points can and cannot support. A single repeat could be coincidence, rounding, or a genuine plateau — the sample size and methodology can't distinguish between those explanations on their own.

Carvalho-Reyes's team built the survey specifically to answer this kind of question over time rather than in a single snapshot, which is why the 2026 edition carries more analytical weight than either of the first two editions individually. A third consecutive reading at or near 2.1 percent would support treating the figure as a genuine sector baseline; a meaningful move in either direction would suggest something changed in member organizations' operating environment between 2024 and 2026 worth investigating in its own right.

Reading this report alongside the Staff Compensation Survey

Associations using this report to plan next year's budget should also consult NANA's Staff Compensation Survey, released each June, which draws on an overlapping but not identical respondent pool. The two surveys are fielded roughly three months apart and are not designed to be reconciled figure-for-figure, but boards setting both a growth target and a staffing budget for the same fiscal year benefit from reading them together rather than in isolation.

An executive director whose organization sits in a fast-growing sector but a below-median staff-size band, for instance, may find the compensation survey's role-by-budget-band tables more useful for the immediate hiring decision than this report's growth figures, which are better suited to setting a realistic multi-year membership target.

What members told the research team

Ahead of this edition, Carvalho-Reyes's team interviewed a subset of 2024 respondents about which sections of the prior report they used most, and which they skipped. Staff-size banding was the section respondents cited most often as directly useful for board conversations; the sector breakdown was the section most often described as "interesting but not actionable" by respondents outside health care and education, the two sectors where sector-level growth diverges most sharply from the topline figure.

That feedback shaped this year's addition of the non-dues revenue and strategic planning sections, both requested by respondents who said they wanted a fuller picture of organizational health beyond membership counts alone. The research team expects to keep refining the report's contents in response to this kind of feedback rather than treating the survey instrument as fixed.

Chapter-level participation

Response rates varied somewhat by chapter affiliation this year, with Mid-Atlantic and Southeast organizations — NANA's two largest chapters by member count — contributing the largest share of responses, consistent with their share of NANA's overall membership. Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain, NANA's two smallest chapters, contributed proportionally

fewer responses but at a similar response rate per member organization, which the research team said supports treating the regional breakdown as representative rather than skewed toward the largest chapters.

Fieldstone Data Partners flagged this as an area to strengthen further in the 2026 fielding cycle, with additional outreach planned through chapter channels to boost response volume from the smaller chapters without changing the validation standard applied to every response.

Members with questions about how their own organization's response was recorded, or who did not respond this cycle but want to participate in 2026, should contact NANA's research team directly rather than waiting for the next fielding announcement — early sign-up helps Fieldstone Data Partners plan validation capacity ahead of the October opening.

Chapter leaders in Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain are being asked to help promote the 2026 fielding window directly to member organizations in their own chapter channels, since a personal chapter-level reminder has outperformed the national email announcement in prior cycles.