

Exploring the Future of Membership

Research by

Association Laboratory Inc.—Lead Investigator: Dean West, FASAE

Avenue M Group—Lead Investigator: Sheri Jacobs, FASAE, CAE

The Haefer Group, Ltd.—Lead Investigator: Susanne Connors Bowman

University of North Texas—Dept. of Public Administration—Lead Investigator: Lisa Dicke, PhD

Report by John Barnes and Jenny Nelson

Special thanks to:

Exploring the Future of Membership Research Grant Recipients

Association Laboratory Inc.—Lead Investigator: Dean West, FASAE

Avenue M Group—Lead Investigator: Sheri Jacobs, FASAE, CAE

The Haefer Group, Ltd.—Lead Investigator: Susanne Connors Bowman

University of North Texas—Dept. of Public Administration—Lead Investigator: Lisa Dicke, PhD

Exploring the Future of Membership Volunteer Task Force

Sharon Kneebone, CAE—Institute of Food Technologists

Toni Rae Salmi—International Foodservice Distributors Association

Andrea Rutledge, CAE—National Architectural Accrediting Board

Retreat & Report Contributors

Chelsea R. Killam—ASAE Foundation

Greg Melia, CAE—ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership

Sharon E. Moss, Ph.D., CRA, CAE—ASAE Foundation

Workshop Attendees

Lowell M. Aplebaum, CAE—Society for Neuroscience

Rhea L. Blanken, FASAE—Results Technology, Inc.

Rebecca Brandt, CAE—Executive Director, Inc.

Denise R. Brown—American Counseling Association

Trudie Bruner, MBA, CAE—Fernley & Fernley, Inc.

Kathleen A. DeMarco—Stringfellow Management Group

Abe Eshkenazi, CSCP, FACHE, CPA, CAE—APICS The Association for Operations Management

Gregory J. Fine, CAE—Turnaround Management Association

James Garnett—Nassau County Dental Society

Eric Hamp

Alison E. Heron—Council for Exceptional Children

DJ Johnson, IOM, CAE—Drug Information Association

Melody Ann Jordan-Carr—ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership

Wendy W. Kavanagh, CAE—Georgia Society of Association Executives

Julia B. Koch, CAE—Produce Marketing Association

Tony R. LeClerc, CAE—The Harrington Company

Lee K. Lowery, CAE

Diana Tavares Mertz, CAE—American Staffing Association

Natalie Nardone, CMP, CAE—Nardone Consulting Group, Inc.

Hester Ndoja, CAE—Florida Society of Association Executives

Arlene A. Pietranton, Ph.D., FASAE, CAE—American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Suzanne C. Pine, CAE—Association Headquarters
Laura Poko—Global Cold Chain Alliance
Susan R. Robertson, CAE—ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership/ASAE Foundation
Ilyse Shapiro—Avalon Association Management
Jeanne Sheehy, MBA—Bostrom
Marcellette Sherman, CFRE—North Texas Commission
Keith C. Skillman, CAE—ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership
Melissa Walling, IOM, CAE—Institute of Real Estate Management
Eleanor Warmack, CAE—Florida Recreation & Park Association

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Membership in context: providing value to members where they are	7
The impact of other decision-makers: engaging influencers to get new members	9
Changing roles and responsibilities: the association position in the larger community	11
Curation of information and data: a new opportunity for associations	13
Removing barriers to change: tackling the obstacles that prevent associations from getting better	15
Conclusion	17
About the Authors	18
About the researchers	18

Introduction

The ease of connection afforded by technological tools could tempt one to call into question the very need for associations. Associations do have a vital role to play in enabling individuals to connect with one another and access information, but, as membership organizations, they must explore new routes of engagement and connection to stay relevant to their members. It has never been more important or timely for the association community to critically assess how associations, and association membership models, are evolving. To effectively serve their constituencies, and to thrive, associations must consider the future of their membership structures.

With this in mind, the ASAE Foundation provided grant funding for an examination of the evolving characteristics of professional affiliation and the economic and societal trends that affect engagement. The outcome of this research is intended to shed light on the critical shifts that are occurring related to association memberships and to provide guidance and direction for future research. This initial phase was exploratory and generated a number of discussion points for critical examination that you are invited to consider within the context of your own organization and the broader association community.

5

The ASAE Foundation designed the research initiative to investigate the future of association membership in two phases: 1) report generation by recipients of an ASAE Foundation grant, and 2) a collaborative interpretation workshop. The first phase was designed to fuel the conversation, and to that end the Foundation administered a grant opportunity for multidisciplinary research initiatives that examine the future of membership. In designing their research, applicants were asked to address three questions regarding association membership:

- 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 impacted in the future by the economic environment?
- What is the nature of community and what unique roles are “associations of the future” uniquely positioned to serve?

In 2013, the ASAE Foundation awarded four grants. The researchers each produced a white paper that summarized their findings related to the above questions. While the researchers were tasked with the same questions in the same topic area, each group chose a unique approach.

- *The Future of Association Engagement* presents the research by **Association Laboratory**. The study included analysis of secondary research on association engagement conducted by Association Laboratory, results from Association Laboratory’s 2014 association environmental scan “Looking Forward,” and data collected via discussions with 33 association chief staff officers and senior membership professionals via online bulletin boards. This study in particular examined the macro forces and large-scale social changes that affect membership decisions on an organizational level and an individual level.

- **Avenue M Group** produced *Innovations in Membership Engagement: A Benchmarking Study* by examining 14 organizations that have created successful and innovative membership models that both encourage growth and support the mission of the organization. In their exchanges with these organizations, Avenue M Group identified five key factors organizations took into account when making successful changes to their membership strategies.
- *New Realities Existing Within Converging Trends: The Future Is Now* from **The Haefer Group, Ltd.** and **Blanken Consulting/Results Technology, Inc.** used in-depth interviews, a literature review, and multiple case studies to focus on the value proposition of the future for membership organizations. The study relates six “new realities” associations must understand and address to engage their membership: demographic shifts, technology and co-creation, networks, volunteerism and civic engagement, blurred sector boundaries, and recent economic shifts and the changing labor market. These external realities shift in importance depending on the internal needs of the members/associations, so it is incumbent on associations to identify how the new realities relate to their situation and find a balance between them.
- The white paper *How Can Professional Associations Provide Meaningful Value for Their Members: Creating Models of Affiliation and Engagement*, from the **Department of Public Administration, University of North Texas (UNT)**, employed surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus groups to query 12 international doctoral students studying in the United States about their experiences with associations. From these conversations, the study gained more information about how these students came to choose their association affiliations, how they engaged, and how they would like to engage in the future.

The full text of the white papers can be found here asaecenter.org/membershipresearch.

Once the research reports were completed and submitted, the second phase of the program intended to bring the conversation to association professionals. The Exploring the Future of Membership Research Retreat was held March 7-8, 2014 in Orlando, Florida. The four grant recipient researchers presented their findings to retreat participants, who included chief staff executives, membership professionals, and association management company leaders. These presentations were followed by a series of facilitated discussions to allow participants to consider the information and ideas presented, to ask critical questions about the findings, and to discuss how the findings affect the range of membership issues facing their respective organizations.

In discussing the four white papers, the retreat participants extracted five key themes related to the future of association membership. These themes appeared repeatedly in the studies and reflected the participants’ own experiences and concerns:

- Membership in context: providing value to members where they are
- The impact of other decision-makers: engaging influencers to get new members
- Changing roles and responsibilities: the association position in the larger community
- Curation of information and data: a new opportunity for associations
- Removing barriers to change: tackling the obstacles preventing associations from getting better

The five key themes that emerged from these discussions represent critical shifts in the business of association membership. They represent the point at which the findings of the research reports intersect with the concerns and needs of association leaders, and they offer questions for association executives to consider. These themes are explored in greater detail in the following report.

Membership in context: providing value to members where they are

In a society where people are increasingly capable of seeking out the information and networks they want when they want it, associations now face the challenge of demonstrating and delivering unique value to their membership. The benefits associations offer must address the different needs of their members and provide value to individual members relative to where they are in their life journey.

Several of the research papers picked up on this growing trend. The Avenue M Group research found that associations were increasingly offering their members routes to connect based on their needs and interests rather than the more-standard professional level or age group categorization. One of the organizations highlighted in *Innovations in Membership Engagement*, AIGA, the professional association for design, revamped its membership pricing and structure to meet the needs of its members and drive engagement. Instead of a membership model based on the stage of an individual's career, AIGA's membership pricing and benefits reflect the member's interest in and commitment to involvement with the association.

7

Another organization, the Indiana University Alumni Association (IUAA), increased membership by creating smaller, targeted events designed to bring together individuals around a common interest. This allowed IUAA to forge stronger bonds with individuals who are most likely to engage while offering them appealing networking activities.

This theme of “meeting members where they are” was reiterated in the retreat discussions. Retreat participants noted that, in the past, associations were better positioned to tell members what was or was not of value for their careers as well as for their industry. Associations defined value. Today members define value for themselves based on their own individual context.

The definition of this value shifts for the individual at various points in his or her life as professional or business, and as personal needs grow and evolve. A person might join an association for specific resources and find membership immensely rewarding. But if that member's situation changes and the association offers nothing of value for his or her new situation, why would the member renew his or her membership? Associations are now expected to adapt to meet their members' needs along their evolving life journeys. This requires providing resources and supports for a variety of situations, rather than providing a one-size-fits-all program of benefits.

Associations have the ability to better address this expectation through personalization and segmentation supported through various social media and other rapidly improving communication technologies. Associations can use the data collected about their members to leverage new opportunities and resources that meet their members' needs. However, the opportunity to effectively meet individual expectations based on context must be balanced with the understanding that an association can't be all things to all people. The very notion of providing such individually oriented programs and services seems to run counter to the collective aspects of associating with a group of people for a larger good.

“The individual defines the community to meet their needs; this may not be the same way the association defines the community.”—Retreat participant

In the end, this discussion raised a number of questions to consider when examining the future of association membership. Is it possible for associations to accommodate their membership model to the person that joins for only one reason, whatever that may be? And is something lost if the membership model is so different from individual to individual—is the notion of associating suffering by this individualized approach?

While conceding the potential that individually oriented programs and services may undercut the very concept of association, does a keen awareness of the context of individual members lead to new insights as to the needs of the entire membership of an association? Is this an opportunity moment for associations?

With this opportunity comes the challenge of the monetization of membership models targeted toward the unique circumstances of individual members. This is an inherently more complicated model which will entail more resources to manage and will have an impact on the bottom line. Is the return on investment warranted?

The impact of other decision-makers: engaging influencers to get new members

Today potential members are not likely to make the decision to join independently. Economic factors and the influence of family and senior colleagues drive that choice, not infrequently making that choice for the potential members. This issue was investigated in several of the research papers, which found numerous points of influence on whether or not an individual joins an association and which association he or she joins.

UNT's How Can Professional Associations Provide Meaningful Value for Their Members: Creating Models of Affiliation and Engagement focused on international students attending graduate school in the United States and found association membership was highly influenced by outside sources. For these students, membership to a related association was required by their departments. Students receive guidance on when to join associations and which associations to join based on the value perceived and expressed by their professors and mentors, with emphasis placed on the quality of networking opportunities and the profile of the organization's conferences.

9

The research presented in *The Future of Association Engagement* indicates that many membership decisions are team-based within the context of budget planning, particularly at trade associations. In many instances, individuals are less involved in decisions about which memberships their organizations will support. Individuals increasingly have to consider the value of membership in terms of the money coming out of their own pockets, at which point at-home influencers have to provide input.

Participants at the research retreat expanded on the discussion of the many individuals and groups involved in the membership and engagement decision-making process. In their discussion groups, the participants reflected on the research and considered what associations are doing now and could do in the future to influence these influencers to gain new members and more fully engage their existing members.

Family members weigh in on the time commitment and resource commitment of members, and engaging family members can foster positive feelings for the association community. One professional society is reaching out to the parents of students in their field by advocating for their child to join the association. By being proactive and pointing out the career benefits, this organization was able to tap into the parental desire to see children succeed. Associations with international members have begun recognizing the fact that some cultures are more family-centric than others, and this reality is also being addressed by the association community. Associations must creatively and effectively engage with families to expand membership and create a positive membership experience.

The work environment also offers opportunity for associations to engage with influencers. As UNT's study observes and retreat participants discussed, faculty at educational institutions have considerable influence on the ability of student and junior faculty members to commit time to associations. There is an opportunity for associations to reach out to faculty and student groups to solidify connections and expand partnerships.

“In a large member company, we have to make our membership pitch to perhaps ten people and our approach has to be different for each of them.”—Retreat participant

Retreat participants were concerned about the impact of changing economic conditions and shifts in industry and professional structures discussed in Association Laboratory’s research. Employers are weighing in on the specific associations they want their employees to join, or not join, and they are expressing opinions about employees’ time commitment to the association and away from their job. Participants concurred with the research that the onus is on associations to demonstrate their value to employers. Associations will see a return on this investment—in proving their worth to these decision-makers, associations are likely to gain members among the employees.

The variable nature of the decision-making process will always be a challenge, and retreat participants articulated a number of questions that associations can consider as they reach out to potential members and their influencers:

- How do we speak to the decision-makers as a larger group, but still recognize the individual who will ultimately belong?
- In some settings, a membership campaign may need to be targeted to multiple individuals who determine whether one individual should become a member of an association. Does this advocacy to the larger group not fully respect the individual who will become a member of the association?
- Is it possible to establish the idea of community among the decision-making group even if they are not the member of the association?
- Even if the decision-makers are not formally a member of the association, can the association attempt to solve problems for this group through the membership of the individual?

10

This challenge is different for professional associations and trade associations. In a professional association, member engagement is measured by individual transactions; in trade associations, the association may only have one primary contact and the association might struggle with making personal connections with other leaders at the company. The issue is even more complicated for hybrid membership organizations, which must address both individual and organization engagement. But in all cases—in professional and trade associations—there are new professionals and potential members emerging every year. Associations can reach them through their influencers.

“We have to be active in sustaining our role in the larger community. It won’t just subsist without our work and responsiveness.”—Retreat participant

Changing roles and responsibilities: the association position in the larger community

Another theme retreat participants gleaned from the research papers was the notion that associations have a responsibility to their community. “Community” can be defined any number of ways, but whether it implies a geographic connection or a more abstract network founded on shared concerns, it is clear that today’s professionals want to be more connected with the world around them. Several of the research papers explored the question about the types of activities members want associations to engage in, and what associations can do for their communities.

As described in *New Realities Existing Within Converging Trends*, there is an increase in civic engagement and volunteering, especially “when the value for such activity is self-evident.” It is not surprising then that, as UNT’s study notes, many association members are also involved with nonprofit volunteering, and these members are especially interested in volunteering for their association on socially important activities. Association members are driven to engage with their communities, local and/or professional, on issues that matter to them.

11

A case study put together by The Haefer Group/Blanken Consulting/Results Technology highlights the American Association of University Women (AAUW) “supporter” strategy to broaden its membership base. To drive this strategy, AAUW creates petitions regarding issues of interest to its base and potential base. Supporters who sign a petition receive AAUW’s Action Alert, a weekly advocacy newsletter, which keeps the supporters in the loop about related issues and AAUW’s advocacy efforts. Supporters also receive low-key messages about membership and donation. This strategy has been a significant success for AAUW, probably in no small part because it allows potential members to get involved with both the association and its civic outreach before committing to full membership.

Retreat participants observed that the civic-mindedness of the membership has influenced the scope of association responsibility. The fundamental value of associations has been their ability to connect a community of similarly engaged people. But as many people feel their commitment to their community should extend beyond their professional and networking activities, it is advantageous for associations to create opportunities for civic engagement, and indeed, many members now expect community outreach as part of the role of the association.

Participants noted that associations have started to address this through programs that engage association members with local issues and activities. These activities include contributing to the local food bank or being an active participant in the local chamber of commerce. Even if it’s not part of an association’s mission to provide assistance to the homeless, for example, members still like to see their associations involved in the broader community. And association members, already members of a regional, national, or international network, certainly believe that community boundaries are not defined by geographic proximity. If a natural disaster strikes one area of the country, members from around the country may expect that the association will assist members in the strike area in the aftermath of the event. Regardless of the specific activity, association members increasingly expect that their professional community will contribute to and support their larger community.

“The opportunity to partner with companies on similar causes could move us beyond the traditional sponsorship model.”—Retreat participant

Participants concluded that associations must think about the unique and exclusive resources that they offer. Local community organizations, online networks, and the other social groups that savvy members tap into to broaden their lives offer numerous advantages. But associations do, too. Associations offer benefits, resources, and a specific kind of community that these networks cannot. What other type of organization can connect a large number of people with common professional interests and goals and provide them with the physical and intellectual space to share their passions, concerns, and ideas? At a time when people spend so many of their waking hours in their workplace, what other type of organization can help turn a job into a career and a profession into a community? It is important that associations never stop communicating these advantages.

However, associations are not the only organizations expanding their members' understanding of community. Private companies are bringing people together in ways that have traditionally been the role of associations and stepping forward to help their communities unrelated to their profit-driven activities. Associations may be losing their reputation as the sole outlet for industry “do-gooders” as for-profit companies seek opportunities to make a positive impact in the world beyond the provision of their product.

12

The lines are blurring between private companies and associations and what they do and provide. The opportunity for associations then is to partner with private companies and perhaps achieve an even greater impact. *New Realities Existing Within Converging Trends* declares “the blurring of sector boundaries is creating opportunities for business, government, nonprofit collaborations to demonstrate innovation, share learning, and provide mission driven services.” The paper highlights a number of partnerships between private companies and nonprofits that created higher profile projects to advance the nonprofits' missions where they align with the private company's goals. For example, an agreement between the National Science Resources Center (now the Smithsonian Science Education Center) and Hewlett Packard was forged in order to improve science education, a goal for both organizations. Partnerships created around a common cause turned the blurring of sector boundaries into an achievement for both sides.

For retreat participants, the value in these partnerships was clear. Associations can offer private companies exposure to the people, industries, and professions with whom they want to associate as they seek to fulfill this new role, while private companies may have more resources to support philanthropic activities. It is up to associations to think creatively about the partnerships they can forge to advance their goals.

Curation of information and data: a new opportunity for associations

For a long time, associations were relatively unique as the provider of essential and topical information to their constituents. But today information comes from multiple sources, and association members are savvy in seeking out new venues for content. Associations are now looked upon as only one source of information. But while members may find new sources, they might not always know what is the best, most useful, or most relevant information. Indeed, this is already a concern for most association executives. *The Future of Association Engagement* notes, “An overwhelming majority of association executives believe their members are experiencing difficulty managing the volume of information. This is true regardless of the type, size, or geographic scope of the association.” Association Laboratory found the development of relevant content, customization of content for distinct audiences, and the delivery of this content were a top concerns for association leaders, and to deliver this content in a way that meets members’ needs is crucial to a successful engagement strategy.

13

Indeed, UNT’s study indicated that respondents received information from their associations related to their career and profession, but frequently their primary sources for information were department colleagues and mentors. The opening for associations, retreat participants concluded, is to be the entity that helps to make sense of the overwhelming amount of information targeted to their members. Furthermore, associations can play a role in helping members determine the most important and most relevant information for their needs. Even members within the same industry or career field may have different interests based on their individual context. The prioritization of information for the individual that is accessible and specific to that person’s life journey may be a growing role for associations.

Associations have been, and continue to be, at the forefront of creating and disseminating a profession’s or trade’s body of knowledge; however, in a world where individuals can affiliate where they want, when they want, and how they want, associations need to rethink how they can provide value to members when it comes to information and knowledge.

Part of this rethinking may be in the very creation of information and knowledge. Co-creation, where members are heavily involved in the development of information and its use of in providing solutions to problems, is a growing area for associations. *New Realities Existing Within Converging Trends* asserts that communication and networking technology can now provide tools to empower associations to engage membership in co-creation. In fact, for many younger members the authenticity and activity of co-creation is a fundamental part of the associations’ value.

While exciting and innovative, research retreat participants identified a number of challenges in co-creation, including the assurance of user buy-in during the co-creation process, the cultural challenges of co-creation, and technology and structural challenges. Associations that commit to this effort may not find the process simple, but they may well find it rewarding.

“Get away from being an “assumption organization”– speak to the needs of the member based on the data, not what we as an organization believe to be the case.”—Retreat participant

Whatever the challenges, more effective use of the data that is available to associations presents opportunities to reinvent membership models. Associations must let the information they have guide their decision making, rather than continuing to do things the same way, listening to the squeaky wheels, or relying on gut instincts. Organizations that move to a data-driven decision-making approach, and that encourage their members to make data-driven decisions, will be able to be more responsive to the changes that their members are facing and increase the value proposition to their members.

“People don’t have as much time, but they still want to make an impact; associations must be responsive to that. Less structure is making it easier for people to be involved.”—Retreat participant

Removing barriers to change: tackling the obstacles that prevent associations from getting better

Change is hard. And change, however necessary, is made even harder when associations erect barriers that prevent reforms from being implemented as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The research papers and the retreat participants identified a number of barriers to change in the association world today. These barriers are varied and wide-ranging. Some have to do with the way organizations are designed. Overly large and complex governance systems with unclear roles and responsibilities for members and staff leaders that protect interest groups working to preserve the status quo prevent associations from proactively tackling challenges and changes. Outdated or inefficient structures restrict the ability to be flexible in meeting the challenges of the association. Associations also create barriers by attempting to be too much to too many, thereby losing focus on their mission.

15

In reflecting on the research papers, retreat participants affirmed that associations need to assess their strengths and weaknesses and move toward being great at a few things and away from being mediocre on a lot of things. As the Avenue M Group paper states, “To build a sustainable membership model and engage future generations of members, organizations cannot simply respond to change, they must anticipate it.” For several organizations, this meant taking stock of their strengths and weaknesses. One of the organizations highlighted in the study, Metal Treating Institute (MTI), took a look at what it could offer to its members that they would not be able to do on their own. They decided to focus on financial benchmarking, offering statistics and forecasts that their members might not have the time or resources to gather independently.

Retreat participants also argued that associations need to address necessary cultural changes. How can you be future-oriented when your culture is very deliberate in nature? Tradition has value, but innovation can create new opportunities for growth and engagement. MTI, as noted in the Avenue M Group study, developed a larger digital presence even though much of its leadership still appreciated traditional formats. Another association in that study, the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE), doubled its membership by reconsidering its mission and expanding globally beyond the market it was initially set up to serve. This in turn drove further structural innovations and led SPE to focus on streamlining its offerings to meet members’ needs. By looking ahead and breaking with tradition when necessary, associations can cultivate membership growth and engagement.

Finally, retreat participants echoed the imperative that associations address the generational shift as boomers retire and millennials become the majority in the workplace. The Association Laboratory, the Avenue M Group, and The Haefer Group/Blanken Consulting/Results Technology papers all noted that the demographic shift to a younger workforce greatly affects what associations must do to reach out to new members. The AAUW case study in *New Realities*

“Millennials think boomers won’t ‘get out of the way’.”—Retreat participant

Existing Within Converging Trends described AAUW’s development of programs like “Start Smart,” an educational program on wage negotiation for women engaged in the post-college job search. The program engaged AAUW’s local branches, built connections at colleges and universities, and demonstrated the benefits of associations to the young college graduates. The UNT study’s research on these young professionals highlighted their preferences, echoing the finding of the studies and the discussions at the retreat: easily accessible and relevant information, socially important outreach activities, and networking opportunities for all members, regardless of career stage.

To engage with the next generation, associations must move proactively. A balance should be found between respecting the contributions of veteran volunteers who have kept an organization moving and cultivating the new ideas and contributions of emerging members. In some associations, the largest demographic of new members is not represented in the leadership. Trade associations’ boards are particularly challenged because member companies will often only allow senior executives to take on volunteer leadership positions. But to grow with this new generation of members, and to take on the challenges of future generations, associations must be thinking creatively about how to authentically and effectively engage their current members and how to reach new members.

The associations that can adapt and be open to new ideas and innovations will survive and flourish. Associations that cannot will go away.

Conclusion

The work on innovation in membership engagement models is not finished. The findings from the white papers and the themes that emerged from the Exploring the Future of Membership Research Retreat set the stage for ongoing discussion, research, and analysis. These themes, reflecting the concerns and trends in association membership today, invite creative analysis and offer a challenge to associations around the world. Every day, associations are considering and developing innovative models for reaching members where they are, engaging new influencers, expanding the responsibilities of associations in the community, addressing the challenge of curating information, and embracing change to traditional membership outreach to engage new members. The ways in which organizations tackle these challenges will determine the future of association membership.

A key element in this ongoing discussion is the participation of the experts in the field: association professionals like you. Your experiences are developing the path for the future of association membership. How is your organization considering the ways in which it demonstrates value to your membership? How are you handling the curation of relevant data for your members? In what ways do you foster community outreach in your organization? What structural changes have you considered or tried? What has succeeded? What has failed? Your stories drive the conversation, inform the research, and help create the future of association member engagement. The ASAE Foundation encourages you to dive deeper by reading the white papers, contacting the authors, and keeping an eye out for future research on member engagement from the ASAE Foundation.

About the Researchers

Dean West, FASAE, is president of Association Laboratory Inc.

Sheri Jacobs, FASAE, CAE, is CEO of Avenue M Group.

Susanne Connors Bowman is co-owner of The Haefer Group, Ltd.

Lisa Dicke, PhD, is professor of the Department of Public Administration at the University of North Texas.

About the Authors

John D. Barnes is president of Barnes Association Consultants, a consulting firm focused on association management and public policy and advocacy. He previously served as chief executive officer at the American Physical Therapy Association, deputy executive director at the American Academy of Dermatology, chief of staff to U.S. Representative Greg Ganske, director of government affairs at the Steel Tank Institute, and special assistant to U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley.

Jenny Nelson is the research project manager at ASAE Foundation. Jenny previously worked for the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. She received her Master of Arts in History from George Mason University.

 **asae**
foundation®
Advancing Association
and Nonprofit Leadership
asaefoundation.org

ISBN 978-0-88034-377-0



9 0000

9 780880 343770