

2026 NCDA Leadership Academy

Leadership in Action Project: *Promoting Member Engagement* **Executive Summary**

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An online survey was sent out to members of NCDA and responses were recorded from March 11th, 2026-March 28th, 2026. Members were invited to participate in the online survey. The survey consisted of eight questions seeking to learn more about members and their engagement with the organization. The survey (Appendix A) was developed by Dr. Carrie Sanders after learning about the charge, reviewing the mission and vision of NCDA and reviewing the NCDA membership committee 5-year strategic plan (2022-2027). It is important to recognize and acknowledge the timing of this project was between year 4 (2025-2026) and year 5 (2026-2027) of the 5-year strategic plan.

Dr. Sanders used a variety of AI tools to include Microsoft Co-Pilot, Gemini, Chat GPT, CLAUDE, Google AI Mode and asked each tool the same questions. The questions asked of the tools were:

- “What can you tell me about non-profit organizations with large memberships?”
- “With those national associations, how do they promote member engagement?”
- “How might national associations approach the engagement work differently or the same as state divisions?”
- “Will you site peer-reviewed articles that have informed your response?”

Once all the technology tools shared their responses to the questions, the outputs were reviewed and consolidated. To continue the line of inquiry using AI tools, Dr. Sanders asked two more questions. The questions were “What can you tell me about the membership of the National Career Development Association?” and “How are members typically introduced to and when and why do they join the National Career Development Association?”

Through utilizing online tools and collaborating with her mentor, Deanna Knighton, NCDA Trustee for Higher Education Career Counselors and Specialists, Dr. Sanders learned more about non-profit organizations and how non-profits engage their members from both the national and state levels. Utilizing AI as a tool to inform factors to include in the inquiry, Dr. Sanders designed and revised the questions through an iterative process utilizing the support and mentorship of Deanna Knighton. In addition to considering the information desired to learn from the questionnaire, the survey was designed with survey respondents time being considered.

Thirty-five people chose to engage in the process of completing the survey. The results indicated the following:

Q1: How were you first introduced to NCDA?

Approximately a fourth of survey respondents were first introduced to NCDA during their academic studies (26.47%); however, the data indicate there are varied ways in which members are first introduced to NCDA, such as through a state career development association (20.59%), the American Counseling Association (11.76%), Networking and Mentorship Engagements (11.76%), online and professional channels (8.82%).

Q2: When did you first join NCDA?

A large portion of respondents first joined NCDA since 2020 (42.86%), with the next largest group beginning their membership between 2010-2019 (28.57%). The smallest group of members represented in this data are those who joined before 1990 (5.71%)

Q3: What was the primary reason you joined NCDA?

The primary reasons for joining NCDA were professional development (37.14%), certification(s) (14.29%), and position requirements (11.43%); however, like the multiple ways members were first introduced to NCDA, there are a wide range of reasons for members to join. Networking for Professional Community (8.57%), Staying up to date with trends (5.71%), Conferences (5.71%) Each of the following represented 2.86% of the respondents: Continuing Education Credits, Leadership and Volunteer Opportunities, Advocacy, Networking for Job Prospects, Complementary Membership, Other

Q4: What is your primary Constituency Group in NCDA?

This survey respondents represented the higher education career counselors and specialists (48.57%), private practice, business & industry, and agencies (37.14%), school career counselors and specialists (8.57%), and counselor educators and researchers (5.71%) constituency groups.

Q5: How would you rate your current engagement with NCDA in the following areas?

Respondents were asked about their engagement in eight areas in addition to being asked about their overall engagement. For each item, they indicated if they were Not at all Engaged, Slightly Engaged, Moderately Engaged, or Extremely Engaged. The areas and the responses are listed in the chart below:

	Not at all engaged	Slightly engaged	Moderately engaged	Extremel y engaged	Total
Communication (Publications)	0% (0)	28.57% (10)	40.00% (14)	31.43% (11)	35

Communication (Social media)	34.29% (12)	37.14% (13)	20.00% (7)	8.57% (3)	35
Virtual Events	11.43% (4)	40.00% (14)	37.14% (13)	11.43% (4)	35
In-person Annual Conference	34.29% (12)	17.14% (6)	20.00% (7)	28.57% (10)	35
Volunteer Opportunities (Committees, Leadership Roles)	42.86% (15)	22.86% (8)	14.29% (5)	20.00% (7)	35
Advocacy Efforts	60.00% (21)	28.57% (10)	2.86% (1)	8.57% (3)	35
Awards and Recognition	71.43% (25)	17.14% (6)	8.57% (3)	2.86% (1)	35
Member Benefits	20.00% (7)	45.71% (16)	20.00% (7)	14.29% (5)	35
Overall Engagement	0% (0)	48.57%	37.14%	14.29%	35

Member engagement through communication avenues indicated respondents had a higher level of engagement with publications as 71.43% of respondents indicated they were moderately or extremely engaged with publications in contrast to 28.57% who indicated they were moderately or extremely engaged through social media. Respondents were divided regarding engagement with virtual events with 51.43% not at all or slightly engaged and 48.57% moderately or extremely engaged with virtual events. The in-person annual conference engagement mirrors the previous numbers with 51.43% of respondents not at all or slightly engaged and 48.57% moderately or extremely engaged with the in-person annual conference. However, if you refer to the chart above, you will notice the extreme response choices have higher rates for the in-person annual conference and the middle responses had more respondents for the virtual events.

Large percentages of respondents indicated they were not at all engaged in the areas of volunteer opportunities (42.86%), advocacy efforts (60.00%), and awards and recognition (71.43%).

Overall, the results indicated that the respondents report some level of engaged with the organization. This includes approximately half of respondents being slightly engaged.

Q6: Rate NCDA's effectiveness in the following areas:

Respondents were asked about their perception of NCDA's effectiveness in four areas. For each item, they indicated if they were Not Effective, Somewhat Effective, Effective, or Extremely Effective. The areas and the responses are listed in the chart below:

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Extremely Effective	Total
Developing member awareness of opportunities to engage with the organization?	0% (0)	25.71% (9)	51.43% (18)	22.86% (8)	35
Providing in-person networking and community building opportunities?	5.71% (2)	42.86% (15)	37.14% (13)	14.29% (5)	35

Providing synchronous virtual engagement opportunities? (eg. constituency gatherings, online trainings, webinars)	0% (0)	28.57% (10)	48.57% (17)	22.86% (8)	35
Providing asynchronous virtual engagement opportunities? (eg. recorded webinars, social media posts,	5.71% (2)	25.71% (9)	48.57% (17)	20.00% (7)	35

Q7: Using the scale below, please answer the following questions:

Respondents were asked the two following questions.

To what extent are you volunteering with NCDA?

To what extent would you like to be volunteering with NCDA?

For each item, they indicated if they were Not at all, To a small extent, To a moderate extent, To a great extent.

	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	Total
To what extent are you volunteering with NCDA?	50.00% (17)	20.59% (7)	11.76% (4)	17.65% (6)	34
To what extent would you like to be volunteering with NCDA?	15.15% (5)	33.33% (11)	36.36% (12)	15.15% (5)	33

Half of respondents indicated they are not currently volunteering with NCDA; however, data indicate that overall, there is interest in being more involved both by those who are not at all engaged and those who are engaged to a small extent.

Q8: What can NCDA do to increase your engagement?

This question was offered as an open-ended response. All responses were consolidated and organized by topic to create areas for consideration to increase individual member engagement. The areas that emerged from respondents to increase engagement were continuing education, credentials, dissemination of information, volunteer opportunities and teamwork. Below are examples from respondents in each area:

Continuing Education

- Asynchronous online options/ virtual engagement
- Articles and Workshops
 - regarding self-care
 - balance multiple career-life roles
- Provide additional in-person regional opportunities
- Ensure all NCDA Presidents and Board Members take appropriate training regarding member growth and engagement
- Provide clarity about how to earn and track CEU's
- Have unique opportunities rather than just traditional

- More programming for private practice

Credentials

- Keep building on this effort
- Make more accessible
- Better communication about benefits

Dissemination of Information

- More marketing of career development research
- Notify members of each upcoming event instead of a monthly list

Volunteer Opportunities

- Inform members how to volunteer
- Provide more opportunities/ various ways to volunteer
- Engagement Opportunities for involvement in committee service or an occasional task rather than just leadership roles

Teamwork

- Utilizing collaborative guidance
- Coordination of efforts
- Utilize strengths
- Focus on helping State CDA's grow
- Support each other-Too many demands on time

Specific recommendations from members about what NCDA can do to increase their engagement were provided. While challenges regarding having the time available to engage more with the organization were indicated, in the recommendations there were items suggesting ideas to promote increased engagement through specific efforts both virtually and in-person.

Summary

Overall, members report being engaged with approximately half of respondents being moderately or extremely engaged. The areas of most engagement as indicated by moderately to extremely engaged were Communications (publications), Virtual Events, and the In-person Annual Conference. The areas of least engagement as indicated by not at all or slightly engaged were Advocacy Efforts, Awards and Recognition, and Communication (social media).

The data suggest the organization could be more effective at building in-person networking and community building opportunities. Half of respondents indicated they are not currently volunteering with NCDA; however, data indicate that overall, there is interest in being more involved both by those who are not at all engaged and those who are engaged to a small extent.

Appendix A

NCDA 2026 Membership Engagement Survey

- 1) How were you first introduced to NCDA?
- 2) When did you first join NCDA?
- 3) What was the primary reason you joined NCDA?
- 4) What is your primary Constituency Group in NCDA?
- 5) Using the scale below, how would you rate your current engagement with NCDA in the following areas:
 - Communication (Publications)
 - Communication (Social media)
 - Virtual Events
 - In-person Annual Conference
 - Volunteer Opportunities (Committees, Leadership Roles)
 - Advocacy Efforts
 - Awards and Recognition
 - Member Benefits
 - Overall Engagement
- 6) Using the scale below, please rate NCDA's effectiveness in the following areas:
 - Developing member awareness of opportunities to engage with the organization?
 - Providing in-person networking and community building opportunities?
 - Providing synchronous virtual engagement opportunities? (eg. constituency gatherings, online trainings, webinars)
 - Providing asynchronous virtual engagement opportunities? (eg. recorded webinars, social media posts)
- 7) Using the scale below, please answer the following questions:
 - To what extent are you volunteering with NCDA?
 - To what extent would you like to be volunteering with NCDA?
- 8) What can NCDA do to increase your engagement?