



**Strategic Growth Opportunities**  
**Low Hanging Fruit**  
**Needs to Support Growth**

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Over the course of our work on the Membership Structure project, from November 2018 to present, a theme began to emerge. **ITGA is poised for growth.** The good news is that many of the building blocks necessary for growth are in place.

- Members who value the networking and resources the organization provides, especially the Annual Conference and weekly newsletter
- Partnerships that bring significant revenue into the organization and build the organization’s brand reach
- An executive director who knows her members and organization well and is committed to seeing the mission through
- An executive committee who is hard working and motivated to move the organization forward
- A plan to bring another staff member on this year, doubling the professional staff

We dove deep into the organization in order to create a membership structure that will serve ITGA now and into the future. This also enabled us to see **strategic growth opportunities.** These opportunities are interconnected. It is not as simple as having a good membership structure and dues in place, it is in how all the pieces fit together.

**Member Engagement Plan**

Hybrid associations (a mix of organizational and individual members) typically provide more than products and services. They provide opportunities for their members to learn, develop and grow professionally. This is done through volunteering. ITGA has an opportunity to develop a member engagement plan that enables members to volunteer their time to further the mission of the organization and in doing so, build their professional experiences and network.



ASAE *Achieving Mutually Beneficial Volunteer Relationships*

- Volunteer work should be meaningful work. This can be characterized by work that utilizes their unique experiences, enables them to make deep connections to others in the profession and moves the work of the association forward. Examples are serving on a program committee, a research committee or being asked to do a specific project such as moderating an online community or discussion.
- Strategic task forces are a great place to involve general members. A board member (or general member) may be asked to lead a task force by the President or Board of Directors, and the rest of the group is made up of members and a member of staff, who brings the necessary context to the work of the group.



- Volunteer work adds value to your members experiences, creates “stickiness” to the organization, forges deep relationships and can have a significant impact on a person’s career.

### Recommendations:

- When creating your member engagement plan, think about the value volunteering for ITGA will have for your member’s professional development and ultimately, their career path. As well as what it will add to ITGA’s capacity as additional people get involved and further the work.
- Managing a member engagement strategy and workforce takes dedicated time and requires staff involvement. Don’t underestimate this in your planning and capacity conversations.
- Be clear about the delineation in staff and volunteer roles. It gets messy when volunteers are given tasks that are more suited to a staff roll (conference site selection, contracting and food and beverage ordering all come to mind). We call this “picking out the color of the napkins” ... and those are better left to the staff for efficiency, consistency and bottom-line reasons.

### Resources:

ASAE research on volunteering: <https://foundation.asaecenter.org/research/governance/beneficial-volunteer-relationships>

Maximizing volunteer involvement:

[https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an\\_plus/2016/april/maximizing-volunteer-involvement](https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an_plus/2016/april/maximizing-volunteer-involvement)

Volunteer engagement plan: <https://www.volunteerhub.com/blog/strategic-volunteer-engagement-plan/>

## Shape the Future of Town & Gown Relations

**There is no substitute for having a seat and a voice at the table. As ITGA matures and more campuses and municipalities have staff dedicated to town and gown relations, opportunities to partner and have a hand in shaping the future grows. Continuing this work on the municipal side and extending this work on the higher education side, like the work that has been done with the Responsible Hospitality Institute and Municipal Leagues of Cities, will increase your brand recognition and sphere of influence.**

- Continue to network with National League of Cities, LC and ICMA, and extend reach to police and planners. Police organizations include the [International Association of Chiefs of Police \(IACP\)](#) as well as the [IACP University/College](#) section, and the [International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Association \(IACLEA\)](#). The primary planner’s organization is the [American Planning Association \(APA\)](#).
- There are several higher education collaboratives that can extend the ITGA brand and offer partnering opportunities for programming, placement, study tours and research. The [Council of Higher Education Management Associations \(CHEMA\)](#) and Student Affairs Higher Education Consortium (SAHEC) are two that are at the top.



- The [Council for the Advancement of Standards](#) (CAS), is the standards setting body for student affairs, student services and student development programs. As a member of CAS, ITGA would appoint two general members to work on creating/revising standards related your body of knowledge. [See standards](#). This is an exceptional volunteer engagement opportunity as well as an opportunity for ITGA to have a voice in setting the standards.
- Sharing ITGA's original content and research by continuing to present at sister association conferences and partnering to produce and deliver webinars to extend brand awareness and solidify ITGA as the go to source of information.
- Consider ITGA's capacity to develop a consulting program for universities and municipalities. This supports member engagement and recruitment as well as affirms your place as being the leader in your space.

### Recommendations:

- Align your strategic goals with your partnering strategy. Once you know where you want to go, the opportunities presented above and others will take shape. Prioritize. It's not important to do all of them, but it is important to consider how participating in some of these opportunities will further your mission.
- CHEMA and SAHEC offer incredible opportunities for peer to peer exchange for your executive director, and in the case of CHEMA, for the Board President and executive director.
- Consider that if ITGA is not represented at CAS, then another organization and its members are setting standards that may affect your members on campus. CAS maintains a list of functional areas for developing new standards. Currently, the work that your members do is embedded in other functional areas.
- Extending your reach at sister association conferences and regional events by including this as a duty of the Board of Directors. Take a poll at the beginning of the board term of all the conferences each board member is planning to attend during the upcoming cycle, and ask them to actively pursue getting a program approved from ITGA, with them as the presenter. ITGA would produce a high-quality presentation about a hot topic of interest to key audiences. Brand the presentation as ITGA. Invite those sister associations, with content appropriate for your membership, to present at your conference.

### A Place to Call Home & Grow Professionally

**People come into these roles from many walks of life and in some cases were the first person in a newly created position. These positions are still relatively new in the grand scheme of things and there is not a lot of mobility from place to place, creating a steady stream of newbies. This presents an opportunity for ITGA to engage people at a time when they need**



**access to information and a network of peers most. For more seasoned professionals, the opportunity to share knowledge and build their professional portfolio is also important. Consider how you are serving members at each stage of their career path.**

- The online resource center, newsletter and online community offer regular touch points and a way to get information. However, if you miss the Annual Conference, then there is a lag time to build your network.
- Having an engagement strategy for all levels offers ways to get involved in the organization and creates a sense of place by serving as a volunteer. See member engagement plan above.
- Developing a membership recruitment and retention plan goes hand in glove with a new membership structure.

### **Recommendations:**

- Create a membership committee who is tasked with both identifying and asking people to become members and welcoming and connecting new members. Past board members who are still engaged in the work of the association may be great to serve in this capacity, combined with new and energetic members who want to meet people and can speak to the value of membership. The icing on the cake, they will enjoy meeting each other and working together!
- Develop an online new member orientation that welcomes and connects people to ITGA and shows them how to use all the resources. This will be especially helpful when a new membership structure is rolled out to explain the nuances of making the most of your membership.
- When the Board of Director's or staff travel to a location, where possible, schedule time to meet with members in the area. This does not have to be formal, but a visit from a member of the leadership (who is wearing their "ITGA hat") to campus or a community can have a significant impact - a feather in the cap. It is a great time to hear what's keeping them up at night, and ask them to engage in the work of the association.
- Consider ITGA's capacity to host smaller, regional or state meet ups, drive-in conferences, and other events create energy, synergy and connectivity. This allows a new member to find their people and build a network of people to reach out to. It also enables a more seasoned member to share their knowledge.
- Conducting and publishing research and original content in the form of an article or blog is a great way for members to share their knowledge and build their professional reputation. This is also true for presenting at conferences, on webinars and podcasts.

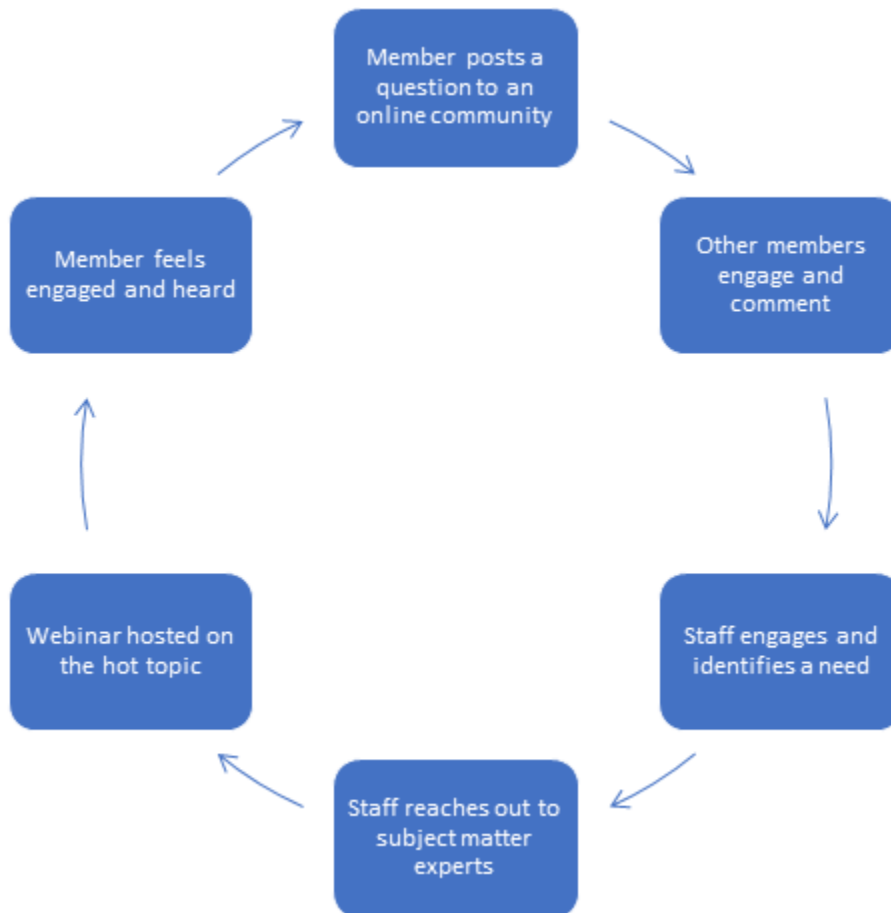


**Resource:**

The research publication from ASAE Press, [\*The Decision to Join: How Individuals Determine Value and Why They Choose to Belong\*](#), mines the motivations of nearly 17,000 individuals to give you insights that lead to a true competitive advantage. From membership marketing to strategic planning, *The Decision to Join* influences every aspect of your organization.

**Potentially Low Hanging Fruit**

- Understand why a member joins by consistently doing a welcome call and why a member leaves by consistently conducting an exit interview
- Consider if a job board might be of value to your members
- Use interns to assist with social media, marketing and design
- Bring back webinars, and when appropriate, use them to address just in time issues as the graphic below highlights





## Foundational Needs Required to Support Growth

Our work enabled us to get a glimpse of the future... and it is a bright future indeed. Investing in technology, right sizing and evolving roles will be key to accomplishing the envisioned future.

## Association Management System (AMS)

An AMS is the enterprise management system for an association. It connects the member records (like a contact management system) with the financial records and is a fundamental necessity. As the organization grows in numbers and complexity, it is an AMS that enables the work to happen.

- For ITGA to grow and put into place a more complex membership structure and member engagement strategy, the organization needs to invest in its technology to support the growth.
- An AMS will create efficiencies with invoicing, speaker and volunteer management, conference program guides, as well as enabling a higher level of detail with regards to tracking and reporting (slicing and dicing numbers), which leads to better decision making.
- An AMS captures when a member joins, what conferences and events individuals attend, certificates gained, bios, photos, committees, financial records, etc.

### Recommendations:

- Participate in the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) technology and small staff association network.
- Invest in staff training through ASAE on AMS selection.
- Selecting an AMS, structuring it to support the unique needs of ITGA, migrating and testing data, and learning to use a new system takes time. This is a major undertaking for any organization in terms of staff time and expense.

### Resources:

**ASAE AMS Course:** <https://www.asaecenter.org/programs/lms-activities/109834-course-48-the-smart-way-for-small-associations-to-select-and-ams>

**AMS Systems and Buying Guide:** <https://softwareconnect.com/association-management/#features-of-association-management-systems>

## Board Member Engagement

To grow the association, the work of the Board of Directors needs to be evolved into a sustainable model for volunteers to move in and out of leadership roles and share in the workload.





- The current model places a heavy burden of work on the Executive Committee.
- The larger Board of Directors acts more as a ratifying body.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Involve the entire Board of Directors in Strategic Planning.
- Move the work of the Executive Committee to an agenda setting body.
- Move the work of the full Board of Directors to a working board.
- Connect the Member Engagement Plan with the work of the Board of Directors. It may take the form of a Board Member leading a specific task force or work group and members serving on those groups.
- This transition takes time as it is established through the nominations and elections process, where position descriptions, nominations criteria and expectations are clear and transparent. Including how many hours it typically takes to do the work expected of a Board Member.

### **Evolve the Annual Conference Model**

**Ensuring access for as many people as possible to attend your primary education and networking event means doing so in a location that is easy to get to, at an affordable price, where people want to go. It also means being able to raise money, control costs, and return income to the bottom line of the association to support programs and services and fund growth.**

- Honoring the past and planning for the future is important for membership associations.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Ask the question “how do we take the very best of what is working and bring that forward, and look at what is not working and how to do that better”.
- Create the criteria for what is necessary for the annual conference. This is a detailed guiding document that includes all your meeting specifications, from distance to an airport, to walkability to restaurants, guestroom nights, meeting room requirements, etc.
- Determine who is in the best position to carry out specific roles related to producing the annual conference. Consider your member engagement plan and how the evolution of the Annual Conference model can open up opportunities for your members to volunteer in meaningful ways.
- Create a communications plan and involve your members in this conversation. Be transparent.

