



***Strong organizations never stop learning.
Great organizations use what they learn to
build an even stronger future.***

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE 2026 ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

July 2026

**Prepared for the Members of the National Career
Development Association**

By Reginald Ross, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

A Letter to Members	Pages 3 – 4
Why We Conducted This Assessment	Pages 4 – 5
How We Listened	Page 5
A Comprehensive Assessment	Pages 6 – 7
Chapter 1 What Makes NCDA Strong	Pages 7 – 10
Chapter 2: Opportunities	Pages 11 – 27
Opportunity 1: Creating a Better Digital Experience	11 - 13
Opportunity 2: Telling the NCDA Story More Clearly	13 - 16
Opportunity 3: Create a Seamless Member Experience	16 – 19
Opportunity 4: Expand NCDA's Reach	19 – 21
Opportunity 5: Strengthen Org. & Leadership Capacity	21 – 23
Opportunity 6: Culture of Innovation & Strategic Renewal	24 – 26
Looking Ahead	Pages 27 – 29

A Letter to Our Members

Dear NCDA Members,

Every successful organization reaches moments when it pauses—not because it is failing, but because it is growing.

The National Career Development Association has experienced significant growth in recent years. Membership remains strong, our credentialing programs continue to expand, our international reach is increasing, and thousands of professionals continue to look to NCDA as the home of the career development profession. These accomplishments are worth celebrating.

At the same time, growth brings new responsibilities.

As organizations evolve, they must periodically ask important questions.

- Are we serving our members as effectively as we can?
- Are we investing in the right priorities?
- Are we prepared for the future of our profession?
- What should we strengthen today to ensure NCDA continues to thrive tomorrow?

To help answer those questions, the NCDA Board of Directors commissioned the 2026 Organizational Assessment—the most comprehensive review of the Association in many years.

This assessment examined NCDA from multiple perspectives. It included confidential interviews with Board leadership, focus groups representing diverse stakeholder communities, a comprehensive member survey completed by 435 members, a review of financial trends, an analysis of our strategic plan, and a governance review of our governing documents. Together, these sources provided a comprehensive picture of the Association's current strengths and opportunities for growth.

One message emerged clearly throughout the assessment:

Members believe in NCDA.

Across the survey, members expressed strong satisfaction with the Association, high confidence in renewing their memberships, and a willingness to recommend NCDA to colleagues. Those findings reflect something more valuable than numbers—they reflect trust, commitment, and a shared belief in the importance of our profession.

The assessment also identified opportunities for improvement. Members, volunteers, and leaders consistently pointed to areas where NCDA can become even stronger, including technology, strategic planning, credential recognition, organizational governance, and communication. Rather than viewing these findings as problems, we see them as opportunities to build on an already solid foundation.

This publication summarizes what we learned in language intended for all members. It is not the full technical assessment prepared for the Board of Directors. Instead, it highlights the major themes, celebrates our strengths, explains the opportunities ahead, and outlines how the assessment can help guide NCDA's future.

Most importantly, this assessment belongs to all of us.

Every member who completed a survey, participated in a focus group, volunteered time, or shared their perspective contributed to this work. Your voices shaped the findings presented here, and your continued engagement will shape the future of our Association.

Thank you for your commitment to NCDA and to the career development profession.

Together, we have every reason to be optimistic about the future.

Sincerely,



National Career Development Association

Why We Conducted This Assessment

Looking Forward by Taking a Fresh Look

Organizations that endure over time share an important characteristic: they are willing to examine themselves honestly. As professions evolve, member expectations change, technology advances, and new opportunities emerge, successful organizations regularly evaluate whether their structures, services, and strategies continue to meet the needs of those they serve.

The NCDA Board of Directors commissioned the 2026 Organizational Assessment with that purpose in mind. Our goal at Pax Aria Resources LLC was not simply to evaluate current operations. The goal was to develop a clear, evidence-based understanding of where NCDA excels today and where thoughtful investments could strengthen the Association for years to come. Unlike many organizational reviews that rely on a single source of information, this assessment brought together several complementary perspectives.

Our assessment team reviewed financial information, organizational documents, governance practices, and the current strategic plan. We also listened directly to Board leaders, volunteers, members, and stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and a comprehensive member survey. By comparing findings across these different sources, the assessment identified patterns that no single method could have revealed on its own.

What We Wanted to Understand

The assessment focused on questions that matter to every member:

- What are NCDA's greatest strengths?
- Where can the member experience improve?
- How well is NCDA positioned for future growth?
- Are the strategic priorities aligned with member needs?
- How can NCDA increase the visibility and value of NCDA credentials?
- What organizational investments will best prepare NCDA for the future?

Throughout the assessment, one principle remained constant:

The purpose was not to assign blame.

The purpose was to identify opportunities. Because organizations that are willing to learn are organizations that continue to grow.

How We Listened

Every Perspective Matters

One of the strengths of this assessment is that it did not rely on a single survey, a handful of interviews, or one group's perspective. Instead, it brought together multiple sources of information to create the most complete picture possible of NCDA today.

We listened to Board leaders, volunteers, members, credential holders, and stakeholders. We reviewed organizational documents, financial information, governance practices, and the current strategic plan. By examining these sources together, we were able to identify patterns that appeared consistently across the organization rather than relying on any one opinion or experience.

The result is an assessment grounded in evidence and informed by the people who know NCDA best.

A Comprehensive Assessment



Why This Approach Matters

Many organizational reviews rely on only one source of information—a survey, a series of interviews, or a financial analysis. This assessment was intentionally designed to integrate multiple perspectives. When members, volunteers, Board leaders, and organizational data all point toward the same conclusion, confidence in the findings increases. When different perspectives reveal different experiences, those differences also provide valuable insight into how the organization functions.

Throughout this assessment, the greatest confidence was placed in findings that were confirmed across several independent sources. That approach helped distinguish isolated concerns from organization-wide trends and ensured that recommendations were based on consistent patterns rather than individual opinions.

What This Means for Members

This assessment is not simply a collection of opinions—it is a comprehensive picture of NCDA drawn from the experiences of hundreds of members, volunteers, leaders, and organizational records. Together, these perspectives provide a reliable foundation for planning NCDA's future.

NCDA is a healthy organization with a strong mission, committed members, dedicated volunteers, respected credentials, and the financial capacity to invest in its future. The opportunities identified in the assessment are about building on that strong foundation—not fixing a broken organization.

Chapter 1: What Makes NCDA Strong

Celebrating the Foundation You Have Built Together

Every Great Journey Begins with Recognizing What Is Working

When organizations undertake an assessment, it is natural to assume the focus will be on identifying problems. But that was never the purpose of the 2026 Organizational Assessment. The goal was to gain a clear understanding of where NCDA is today so that you can make thoughtful decisions about tomorrow. One message emerged consistently throughout the assessment:

NCDA is a strong organization.

Through interviews, focus groups, survey responses, financial analyses, and organizational reviews, participants repeatedly described an Association that has earned the trust of its members, contributes meaningfully to the profession, and is well positioned to continue growing. That does not mean there are no opportunities for improvement. Every healthy organization can become even stronger. But those opportunities should be understood within the context of an Association that already possesses many important strengths.

The following pages highlight some of the themes that members and leaders identified as the foundation of NCDA's continued success.

Members Believe in NCDA

Perhaps the clearest finding from the assessment is the confidence members have in their Association. Across the member survey, respondents consistently expressed positive views about their overall membership experience. Members reported high levels of satisfaction with NCDA and indicated they are likely to renew their memberships and recommend the Association to colleagues. These are important indicators of organizational health because they reflect more than satisfaction with a single program or event—they reflect trust in the Association itself.

This confidence has been built over many years through the collective efforts of volunteers, staff, Board members, affiliate leaders, educators, practitioners, and countless others who contribute their time and expertise to advance the profession. For many members, NCDA represents more than a professional association. It represents a professional home.

Member Spotlight

"NCDA is extraordinarily welcoming."

A Mission That Continues to Matter

Career development has never been more important. Rapid changes in technology, workforce needs, education, and economic conditions continue to reshape how people prepare for and navigate their careers. In this environment, the work of career development professionals is increasingly vital. The assessment found that members remain deeply committed to NCDA's mission and recognize the Association as an important voice for the profession. Whether serving students, adults in career transition, military personnel, workforce agencies, colleges and universities, or private-sector clients share a common purpose: helping individuals make informed career decisions that improve their lives.

That shared mission creates a strong sense of identity and community within the Association.

A Community Built on Service

One of NCDA's greatest strengths cannot be measured on a balance sheet. It is the extraordinary commitment of its volunteers. Across nearly every aspect of the Association, members contribute their time, expertise, and leadership to support conferences, publications, credentialing, committees, professional development, governance, and state divisions.

This culture of volunteerism reflects something important. Members do not simply participate in NCDA—they help build it.

The assessment found that this strong culture of engagement remains one of the organization's defining characteristics and provides a significant advantage as NCDA plans for the future.

Financial Strength Creates Opportunity

Strong organizations need more than good intentions. They also need the resources to invest in their future. The financial review conducted as part of the assessment found that NCDA is financially stable and has the capacity to make strategic investments in areas that will strengthen the member experience and position the Association for continued success. Rather than facing an immediate financial crisis, the organization has the opportunity to invest deliberately in priorities that align with its mission and long-term goals.

This finding is significant because it shifts the conversation from asking, "**Can we afford to improve?**" NCDA can ask, "**How should we invest wisely to create the greatest value for members?**" That distinction opens the door to thoughtful innovation rather than reactive decision-making.

A Strong Foundation for the Future

Taken together, the findings from the assessment paint a hopeful picture.

NCDA enters its next chapter with many advantages:

- A respected reputation within the career development profession.
- Members who value the Association and intend to remain engaged.
- Dedicated volunteers who contribute extraordinary time and expertise.
- Financial stability that supports strategic investment.
- A mission that remains highly relevant in a rapidly changing world.
- A culture of collaboration and professional service that continues to unite members around a common purpose.

These strengths are not the conclusion of the assessment—they are its starting point. The opportunities described in the next chapter are designed to build on this foundation, ensuring that NCDA continues to evolve alongside the profession it serves.

What This Means for Members

The assessment confirms that NCDA is not beginning from a position of weakness. It is beginning from a position of strength. The recommendations that follow are intended to help

an already successful organization become even more responsive, more innovative, and better prepared for the future.

The Five Strengths That Set NCDA Apart

A STRONG FOUNDATION. A BRIGHT FUTURE.



1. MEMBER CONFIDENCE

Members value NCDA—and it shows. Survey results reveal high satisfaction, strong intent to renew, and a willingness to recommend NCDA to colleagues.



Our members believe in NCDA and its value to the profession.



2. MISSION THAT MATTERS

NCDA's mission is more important than ever. Members are united by a shared purpose: empowering individuals, strengthening careers, and advancing the profession.



Our mission guides our work and inspires our impact.



3. A COMMUNITY THAT CARES

NCDA is powered by volunteers. Members give their time, their talents, and their passion to committees, state divisions, conferences, and programs across the globe.



Together, we build a vibrant community and stronger profession.



4. FINANCIAL STABILITY

NCDA is financially strong and well-positioned to invest in the future. Prudent financial stewardship gives us the capacity to grow and serve our members even better.



Sound finances today create opportunities for tomorrow.



5. FUTURE READINESS

NCDA has the people, resources, and momentum to meet tomorrow's challenges. We are ready to evolve, innovate, and lead the profession forward.



We are prepared, focused, and ready for what's next.

STRONG TODAY. GREATER TOMORROW. *TOGETHER.*

"Strong organizations don't stand still. They build on their strengths to meet tomorrow's opportunities."

CHAPTER 2

Six Opportunities That Will Shape NCDA's Future

Introduction

Every successful organization reaches moments when it asks an important question:

"How can we become even better?"

That question guided the 2026 Organizational Assessment.

Throughout the assessment, members, volunteers, Board leaders, and staff expressed confidence in NCDA's mission and accomplishments. At the same time, they also identified several areas where thoughtful improvements could enhance the member experience, strengthen organizational effectiveness, and position NCDA for continued success. These opportunities are not signs of organizational weakness. They are signs of organizational maturity.

Healthy organizations are willing to examine themselves honestly, invest strategically, and evolve alongside the professions they serve. Across the assessment, five opportunities consistently emerged. Together, they represent a roadmap for strengthening NCDA while preserving the values and mission that members already appreciate.

Six Opportunities at a Glance

Opportunity	Why It Matters
Better Technology	Easier experiences
Clear Story	Stronger recognition
Seamless Member Journey	Greater engagement
Partnerships	Larger influence
Leadership Capacity	Better execution
Continuous Innovation	Long-term success

Opportunity One: Creating a Better Digital Experience

If there was one theme that appeared consistently throughout the assessment, it was technology. Members, volunteers, and leaders repeatedly described technology as one of the Association's greatest opportunities for improvement. Conversations focused less on individual software applications and more on the overall member experience—how easily members can access

information, register for events, manage credentials, communicate with the Association, and connect with one another.

Today's members expect digital experiences that are intuitive, connected, and responsive. They want to complete routine tasks quickly, find information easily, and spend less time navigating systems and more time engaging with professional resources. The assessment found that improvements in technology have the potential to benefit nearly every aspect of NCDA. Modernizing digital systems is not simply an operational upgrade; it is an investment in member satisfaction, volunteer effectiveness, staff efficiency, and the Association's long-term capacity to innovate.

What Members Told Us

Members consistently emphasized the importance of:

- Easier website navigation
- More intuitive online services
- Better integration across NCDA systems
- Improved communication tools
- A smoother overall digital experience

Rather than viewing technology as a back-office function, members increasingly see it as a central part of their relationship with the Association.

Why It Matters

Every interaction a member has with NCDA—registering for a conference, renewing membership, accessing publications, completing credential requirements, or participating in professional development—depends on technology. When those experiences are simple and seamless, members spend their time learning, networking, and advancing professionally. When they are difficult, frustration can overshadow the value of the programs themselves. Investing in technology is ultimately an investment in people.

Looking Ahead

The assessment suggests that future technology investments should be guided by one overarching principle:

Design every digital experience around the needs of the member.

That means making information easier to find, simplifying routine processes, integrating systems where possible, and continually improving the overall user experience. Technology should

quietly support the work of career professionals—not become another challenge they have to overcome.

What This Means for Members

Improving technology is about more than updating software. It is about creating a smoother, more connected, and more engaging experience every time members interact with NCDA.



Opportunity Two: Telling the NCDA Story More Clearly

Helping More People Understand Who You Are and Why You Matter

A Strong Organization Deserves a Strong Story

Every successful organization has a story. Not simply a history of when it was founded or a description of its programs, but a clear explanation of who it is, why it exists, and the unique value it brings to the people it serves. Throughout the assessment, members expressed deep appreciation for NCDA. They value the Association's resources, professional development, conferences, publications, credentials, and the community it provides.

Yet another important theme also emerged. Many participants indicated that it can be difficult to explain, in a simple and consistent way, what makes NCDA uniquely valuable compared with

other organizations serving related professions. That finding is not unusual for organizations that have grown over many decades. As new programs, credentials, partnerships, and audiences are added, the organization's story can become increasingly complex.

The opportunity is not to redefine NCDA. The opportunity is to communicate its identity with greater clarity and consistency.

Why Clarity Matters

A clear organizational identity benefits everyone. When prospective members understand what NCDA offers, they are more likely to join. When employers recognize the value of career development professionals, the profession gains credibility. When policymakers and partners understand NCDA's role, opportunities for collaboration and advocacy expand. And when members can confidently describe the Association to colleagues, they become some of NCDA's most effective ambassadors. Clarity strengthens every conversation.

More Than a Professional Association

One message echoed throughout the assessment:

NCDA is much more than an organization that hosts conferences or provides continuing education.

It is:

- A professional home for career development practitioners.
- A trusted source of evidence-based knowledge.
- A leader in professional standards and ethical practice.
- A developer of nationally recognized credentials.
- A community that connects professionals across education, workforce development, government, private practice, business, and nonprofit organizations.

Together, these roles create a unique value proposition that few organizations can match. The assessment suggests there is an opportunity to communicate this more consistently to both members and external audiences.

Speaking with One Voice

Organizations build strong reputations when their message is consistent. Imagine if every NCDA Board member, volunteer leader, state division officer, instructor, presenter, and member answered the question,

"What is NCDA?"

using the same core ideas. The words would not need to be identical. But the message would be.

That shared understanding would make it easier to recruit members, strengthen partnerships, support advocacy efforts, and increase awareness of the profession itself.

Creating that consistency begins with defining a clear organizational narrative that everyone can confidently share.

Looking Ahead

The assessment points toward several opportunities that could strengthen NCDA's public identity:

- Clearly articulate NCDA's unique role within the career development profession.
- Develop consistent messaging that can be used across publications, presentations, conferences, and digital platforms.
- Help members become ambassadors who can easily explain the value of belonging to NCDA.
- Ensure that branding, communications, and outreach consistently reflect the Association's mission and strategic priorities.

None of these efforts require changing who NCDA is. Instead, they help ensure that the Association's strengths are communicated as effectively as they are delivered.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF A CLEAR IDENTITY

One Clear Story Creates Many Positive Outcomes



What This Means for Members

Every member has a role in telling the NCDA story. The clearer the message, the easier it becomes to attract new members, strengthen the profession, build partnerships, and demonstrate the value of career development to employers, educators, policymakers, and the public.

Opportunity Three: Create a Seamless Member Experience

Why this matters

Every interaction a member has with NCDA shapes their perception of the organization. Whether someone is discovering NCDA for the first time, registering for a conference, renewing membership, pursuing a credential, volunteering, or accessing professional development, each experience contributes to a broader impression of the association.

The assessment revealed that members overwhelmingly value what NCDA offers. However, they also identified opportunities to make engaging with the organization simpler, more intuitive, and more connected. As organizations grow, programs and services often evolve independently to meet emerging needs. Over time, this can create multiple entry points, processes, and communication channels that make the member experience feel more complex than intended.

Creating a seamless member experience is not about reducing services—it is about making those services easier to discover, access, and navigate.

What We Heard

Across interviews, surveys, and focus groups, members consistently described several common themes:

- Members appreciate the breadth and quality of NCDA's programs and services.
- New members sometimes struggle to understand where to begin.
- Information can be difficult to locate across multiple platforms and communication channels.
- Members want a more connected experience that reflects the organization as a whole rather than individual programs.
- Volunteers and leaders recognize opportunities to simplify processes while maintaining the organization's strong culture of service.

Importantly, these comments were not criticisms of the organization's commitment to members. Rather, they reflected the natural challenges that accompany decades of organizational growth and success.

The Opportunity

The member journey should feel like a single, connected experience rather than a series of separate interactions. Imagine a new counselor joining NCDA.

They should immediately understand:

- How to get started.
- Which resources are most valuable at their career stage.
- How to become involved.
- What professional development opportunities are available.
- How membership connects with credentials, conferences, communities, and leadership opportunities.

Likewise, experienced members should find it easy to expand their involvement, mentor others, pursue advanced learning, and contribute to the profession. When every touchpoint is intentionally connected, members spend less time navigating systems and more time benefiting from the community, knowledge, and opportunities NCDA provides.

A Connected Member Journey



Rather than viewing membership as a single annual transaction, the assessment encourages thinking of it as an ongoing professional journey. Each stage should naturally lead to the next, creating continuous value throughout a member's career.

Looking Ahead

Creating a seamless member experience is one of the highest-impact investments NCDA can make because it strengthens every other strategic priority. When members can easily access resources, understand opportunities, and see a clear path for involvement, they are more likely to:

- remain engaged,
- renew their membership,
- volunteer for leadership,
- pursue professional credentials,
- participate in learning opportunities,
- recommend NCDA to colleagues, and
- become ambassadors for the profession.

A seamless experience also enables staff and volunteers to focus more on delivering value and less on helping members navigate complexity. Ultimately, the goal is simple: every interaction should reinforce the same message—that NCDA understands its members, supports their professional journey, and makes it easy to belong.

Opportunity Four: Expand NCDA's Reach Through Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy

Why this matters

No professional association advances its mission alone. Lasting influence is built through strong relationships—with employers, educational institutions, government agencies, healthcare organizations, workforce development partners, and other professional associations. The assessment found broad agreement that NCDA has earned tremendous credibility over its history. At the same time, participants recognized an opportunity to increase the organization's visibility and influence beyond its current membership.

As career development becomes increasingly important in education, workforce development, mental health, economic mobility, and lifelong learning, NCDA is well positioned to help shape national conversations about the future of work and career development. Expanding strategic partnerships and strengthening advocacy efforts will enable the organization to amplify its impact while advancing the profession it represents.

What We Heard

Participants consistently described opportunities to strengthen NCDA's external presence by:

- Building stronger relationships with employers and industry leaders.
- Increasing collaboration with educational institutions.
- Expanding partnerships with government and workforce agencies.
- Developing stronger relationships with allied professional organizations.
- Increasing public awareness of the value career development professionals provide.
- Taking a more visible leadership role on emerging issues affecting the profession.

Many members expressed pride in NCDA's expertise and believed the organization could have an even stronger voice in shaping policy, research, and public understanding.

The Opportunity

Strategic partnerships are about more than expanding organizational relationships—they create opportunities that directly benefit members. When NCDA strengthens relationships with employers, members gain greater recognition for their expertise. When universities collaborate with NCDA, future professionals enter the field with stronger connections to the association. When policymakers recognize NCDA as a trusted resource, the profession gains greater visibility and influence. When organizations work together around shared goals, the entire career development ecosystem becomes stronger.

Each partnership creates new pathways for advancing both the profession and the people it serves.

Expanding NCDA's Circle of Influence



A larger network creates greater visibility, stronger advocacy, broader opportunities for members, and increased impact for the profession.

Looking Ahead

The assessment suggests that NCDA has an opportunity to evolve from being viewed primarily as a professional association to being recognized as the leading voice for career development. That evolution will not happen through advocacy alone. It will come from building trusted relationships, sharing expertise, collaborating across sectors, and consistently demonstrating the value that career development professionals bring to individuals, organizations, and communities. By expanding its reach through strategic partnerships and advocacy, NCDA can strengthen its influence while creating new opportunities for members and helping ensure that career development remains an essential part of education, workforce development, and lifelong success.

Opportunity Five: Strengthen Organizational Agility and Leadership Capacity

Why this matters

Every successful organization reaches moments when it must evolve—not because it has fallen behind, but because its aspirations have grown. The assessment found an organization with dedicated volunteer leaders, committed staff, and a strong culture of service. These strengths have enabled NCDA to serve its members well for many decades. At the same time, participants recognized that increasing expectations, expanding programs, advancing technology, and a rapidly changing professional landscape require an organization that can adapt quickly while remaining true to its mission. Strengthening organizational agility is not about changing who NCDA is. It is about ensuring that the organization has the leadership, structures, and processes needed to respond effectively to future opportunities and challenges.

What We Heard

Across surveys, interviews, and focus groups, participants described an organization that is deeply committed to its mission and supported by passionate volunteers and staff.

They also identified opportunities to:

- Improve coordination across committees and organizational functions.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities where appropriate.
- Strengthen communication between leadership groups.
- Make decision-making more efficient while preserving thoughtful governance.
- Better align resources with strategic priorities.
- Prepare future leaders through intentional succession planning and leadership development.

These observations reflected a common theme: as organizations grow, they benefit from periodically examining how they work—not just what they do.

The Opportunity

Organizational agility enables NCDA to respond more effectively to change while continuing to deliver exceptional value to members.

When leadership structures are aligned with strategic priorities:

- Decisions can be made more efficiently.
- Staff and volunteers collaborate more effectively.
- Resources are directed toward the highest-impact initiatives.
- Innovation becomes easier to support.
- Members experience a more responsive and forward-looking organization.

Agility is not about moving faster for its own sake. It is about ensuring that the organization can adapt thoughtfully, make informed decisions, and sustain momentum in an increasingly dynamic environment.

Building Capacity for the Future



Looking Ahead

NCDA has a long history of thoughtful leadership and dedicated service. The assessment affirms those strengths while identifying opportunities to build even greater organizational capacity for the future. By investing in leadership development, strengthening collaboration, and aligning organizational resources with strategic priorities, NCDA can remain agile in a changing environment while preserving the values that have guided the association for more than a century.

The result is an organization that is better equipped to serve its members, respond to emerging opportunities, and continue leading the career development profession with confidence.

Opportunity Six: Build a Culture of Continuous Innovation and Strategic Renewal

Why this matters

The assessment identified important opportunities to strengthen technology, clarify NCDA's identity, enhance the member experience, expand strategic partnerships, and build organizational capacity. Together, these opportunities point toward a broader conclusion.

The most successful organizations do not rely on a single strategic plan or one-time transformation. Instead, they cultivate a culture of continuous learning, thoughtful innovation, and ongoing renewal. As the career development profession continues to evolve, so too will the needs of members, employers, educators, and the communities they serve. Remaining the profession's leading association will require not only responding to change but anticipating it.

Building a culture of innovation ensures that NCDA remains prepared for whatever comes next.

What We Heard

Throughout the assessment, participants expressed confidence in NCDA's future and optimism about its potential. They also shared a common belief:

The organization should continue asking important questions, listening to members, evaluating its impact, and adapting as new opportunities emerge.

Members want an association that:

- Learns from experience.
- Welcomes new ideas.
- Encourages thoughtful experimentation.
- Makes decisions using evidence and member feedback.
- Continuously improves how it serves the profession.

These themes reflect a desire for continuous progress rather than periodic change.

The Opportunity

Innovation is often associated with new technology, but organizational innovation is much broader.

It includes:

- Listening before acting.
- Learning from data and member feedback.
- Encouraging collaboration across committees and generations.
- Testing new ideas on a manageable scale.
- Measuring results and refining approaches over time.
- Celebrating successes while learning from challenges.

A culture of innovation creates an organization that is resilient, adaptable, and positioned for long-term success. Rather than viewing change as a disruption, innovative organizations view change as an opportunity to learn and improve.

Continuous Renewal

THE CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A mindset. A process. A commitment to a better future.



A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS INNOVATION CREATES LASTING IMPACT



Member-Centered
Everything we do starts with and delivers value to members.



Adaptive
We respond to change with agility, curiosity, and forward thinking.



Collaborative
We achieve more together through partnership and shared purpose.



Evidence-Informed
We make decisions using data, insights, and member feedback.



Future-Ready
We build today for a stronger, more relevant tomorrow.



Together, we learn. Together, we grow. Together, we **lead** the future of career development.

Every cycle strengthens the organization, enhances member value, and advances the profession.

Looking Ahead

NCDA's greatest strength has always been its people—the members, volunteers, leaders, and staff who are committed to advancing career development. The assessment demonstrates that the organization has a strong foundation on which to build. It also highlights meaningful opportunities to become even stronger. By embracing continuous innovation and strategic renewal, NCDA can remain responsive to changing member needs, lead important conversations shaping the profession, and continue delivering exceptional value for generations to come.

Innovation is not a destination. It is an ongoing commitment to learning, adapting, and improving. That commitment will help ensure that NCDA remains not only relevant, but indispensable to the future of career development.

Bringing It All Together

This final opportunity naturally completes the strategic journey described throughout the report:

Opportunity	Strategic Theme
1	Modernize Technology
2	Clarify the NCDA Story
3	Create a Seamless Member Experience
4	Expand Partnerships & Advocacy
5	Strengthen Organizational Capacity
6	Build a Culture of Continuous Innovation

Together, these opportunities tell a coherent story:

- **Modernize** the tools that support the mission.
- **Clarify** the organization's identity and value.
- **Enhance** every member's experience.
- **Expand** NCDA's influence and partnerships.
- **Strengthen** the organization's ability to lead.
- **Sustain** success through continuous learning and renewal.

Your Shared Future

Every organization reaches defining moments—times to reflect on where it has been, celebrate what it has accomplished, and envision what comes next. This assessment represents one of those moments for NCDA. Throughout this process, one message emerged consistently and clearly: **NCDA is a strong organization with an even stronger future.**

Members, volunteer leaders, staff, and partners spoke with pride about the association's history, its commitment to professional excellence, and the community it has created over more than a century. They also shared thoughtful ideas about how NCDA can continue to evolve in response to a changing profession and an increasingly dynamic world.

Those ideas have been organized throughout this report into six opportunities for the future:

- Modernize technology to better support members and volunteers.
- Clarify the NCDA story and strengthen the organization's identity.
- Create a seamless member experience across every stage of professional growth.
- Expand partnerships and advocacy to increase the profession's influence.
- Strengthen organizational capacity to support long-term success.
- Foster a culture of continuous innovation and strategic renewal.

Taken individually, each opportunity represents an important step forward. Together, they describe something much larger. They describe an organization that is positioning itself not simply to respond to change, but to help lead it.

As career development continues to shape education, workforce development, mental health, economic mobility, and lifelong learning, the need for trusted professional leadership has never been greater. NCDA is uniquely positioned to help meet that need by bringing together practitioners, educators, researchers, leaders, and partners around a shared commitment to advancing the profession.

The future envisioned in this report cannot be achieved by any one committee, volunteer, staff member, or Board of Directors alone. It will be built through the collective efforts of thousands of members who contribute their knowledge, experience, ideas, and passion every day.

Every conversation. Every volunteer. Every mentor. Every innovation. Every new member. Every partnership. Every act of leadership.

Together, these individual contributions create the strength of the association and the future of the profession. Perhaps the most important finding from this assessment is not found in any chart, survey response, or recommendation. It is the unwavering commitment of the people who make NCDA what it is.

That commitment provides confidence that the organization can continue to grow, adapt, and thrive while remaining true to the mission and values that have guided it for generations.

The opportunities presented in this report are not intended to define a final destination. They represent a roadmap for continuous learning, collaboration, and improvement. As the profession evolves, so too will NCDA. As new challenges emerge, new opportunities will arise. As members continue to lead, learn, and serve, the association will continue to strengthen its impact on individuals, organizations, and communities around the world. The future of NCDA will not be shaped by this report alone. It will be shaped by the people who choose to build it.

Together, you can honor the legacy of those who came before while embracing the possibilities that lie ahead. Together, you can strengthen our profession. Together, you can expand your impact. Together, you can ensure that NCDA remains the leading voice for career development for generations to come.

A Final Reflection

The future described in these pages is not the responsibility of the Board alone. It belongs to every member. Whether you volunteer, mentor, advocate, welcome a new colleague, or simply share the story of our profession, you help shape what comes next. Together, we will build the next chapter of NCDA.