

DIVISION 31 TOWN HALL APA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Building Membership Strategies for Growing Small, Medium & Large SPTAs

Psychology Membership Growth Opportunities Report
*Compiled from Panel Presentation, CPA Slides
& Video Source Materials · April 2026*

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Small SPTA

Medium SPTA

Large SPTA

Executive Summary

This report synthesizes strategies and lessons drawn from the Division 31 Town Hall presentation, the California Psychological Association’s slide deck (v8), and accompanying video content delivered by leaders of Small, Medium, and Large State, Provincial, and Territorial Psychological Associations (SPTAs). The materials represent frontline experience from four associations of markedly different sizes and contexts, providing a rare cross-sectional view of what is actually working in psychology membership growth today.

Three themes unify the findings regardless of SPTA size:

- Value must be visible, tangible, and continuously communicated
- Strategic planning — not reactive management — drives sustained membership growth
- Reducing friction in joining and renewing is as important as the benefits themselves

1,206	151	\$24,212
KPA Total Membership (2025)	Free CE Hours (HPA + HiBHC 2025)	CPA Summit New Revenue Generated

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Small SPTA

Kentucky Psychological Association (KPA)
Federico "Felito" Aldarondo, PhD — KPA President

Overview: KPA represents a small- to-mid-size SPTA operating in a state where the total licensed psychology workforce (1,520) far exceeds its current membership (1,206). This gap is both the central challenge and the primary growth opportunity. KPA's approach is notable for its discipline around fundamentals and its deliberate inclusion of Masters-level practitioners — an increasingly important model for smaller associations seeking to widen their base.

Key Strategy: Back to Basics

KPA's leadership returns consistently to foundational principles that organizations often neglect as they mature. Their "Back to Basics" framework rests on four pillars:

1. Board Quality & Ambassador Culture

- Board members are treated as KPA ambassadors first, administrators second
- Nominations are solicited early with emphasis on energy, engagement, and reliability
- Board size is calibrated to absorb turnover without disrupting operations
- Explicit expectations are shared before any nomination is accepted, minimizing surprise departures

Board Member Expectations include: attendance at all meetings, donations to KPA Foundation (KPF) and KPA Political Action Committee (KPAC), retreat and convention attendance, and active procurement of items for the KPF silent auction.

2. Value Articulation: A recurring theme in KPA's approach is the explicit, ongoing communication of member value. The association does not assume members understand what they receive — it works to make value clear and personal across every member touchpoint.

3. Membership Structure: KPA has intentionally designed its membership tiers to be inclusive and navigable. Clear structure removes confusion and lowers the psychological barrier to joining.

4. Consistent Practices: KPA invests in reliable operational practices: predictable communication cadences, consistent event programming, and dependable governance. Reliability itself becomes a retention tool — members who know what to expect are more likely to stay.

Masters-Level Inclusion: A Strategic Growth Engine

One of KPA's most instructive contributions is its active embrace of Masters-level psychologists as full members — a significant departure from associations that limit full membership to doctoral-level practitioners.

Table. Masters-Level Inclusion: A Strategic Growth Engine

Membership Snapshot (End of 2025)	Licensed Psychology Workforce (Kentucky)
Total Members: 1,206	Total Licensed: 1,520
Doctoral: 428 Masters: 146 Other: 24	Doctoral: 990 Masters: 418 Temp: 112
Voting Members: 680	Growth opportunity: ~314 non-member licensees

KPA's Board actively reflects this inclusive philosophy: of 23 Board members, 4 are Masters-level, with no restrictions on leadership by degree level. This sends a clear signal to the full licensee population that KPA represents them.

Growth Opportunities for Small SPTAs

- Audit the full licensed professional population — the gap between licensees and members is the addressable market
- Adopt Masters-level inclusion as a formal strategy with dedicated outreach and board representation
- Invest in board quality as a primary membership driver — ambassadors recruit; administrators do not
- Standardize onboarding expectations for leadership roles to reduce mid-term attrition

Medium SPTA

Tennessee Psychological Association (TPA)

Elise Oehring, PhD — TPA Executive Director & Strategic Planning Co-Chair

Overview: TPA’s approach is anchored in a sophisticated strategic planning model that treats membership not as a committee responsibility but as an organizational imperative woven through every function of the association. Elise Oehring’s insights are particularly valuable for medium-sized associations navigating the space between the agility of small organizations and the resources of large ones.

Key Strategy: Broadening the Tent

TPA’s foundational question for membership growth is: “Can every psychologist in Tennessee see themselves in this association?” The answer requires intentional segmentation and tailored outreach. TPA identifies psychologists across nine distinct dimensions, each representing a different identity, need, and communication approach.

Table. Key Strategy: Broadening the Tent

Stage of career	Workplace setting	Area of specialization
Population served	Professional role	Training level
Practice model	Geographic context	Leadership role

The principle: different audiences seek different value. A newly licensed psychologist in a hospital system needs different things from their association than a 20-year private practitioner in a rural county. Generic outreach fails both. Diversified messaging and benefits make membership feel relevant rather than administrative.

Key Strategy: Membership by Design

Since 2019, TPA has operated a formal Strategic Planning Council (SPC) that meets monthly, converting member feedback directly into organizational priorities:

- Initial strategic plan informed by a 2019 survey of both members and non-members
- The SPC meets monthly to route emerging needs into planning priorities in near-real time
- Membership growth is embedded across all strategic planning — not siloed in a single committee
- When members see their feedback reflected in decisions, trust and retention both improve

Key Strategy: Lowering the Barrier to Entry

TPA uses non-member event pricing as an active membership conversion tool:

- The price difference between member and non-member event registration approximates the cost of one year of dues
- A non-member who attends a TPA event and pays the differential effectively receives a full year of membership
- The goal shifts from attendance to relationship: a full year to demonstrate value is far more powerful than a single event interaction

Key Strategy: Anniversary-Year Dues Cycle

TPA shifted from calendar-year to anniversary-year dues, giving every member a full 365 days from the date they join or renew. Results:

- Improved member experience through greater perceived fairness
- Reduced renewal friction by eliminating the “penalty” of late-year joining
- Smoother revenue distribution across the full calendar year

Growth Opportunities for Medium SPTAs

- Conduct a member and non-member needs survey — segmented by career stage, setting, and specialty — and use findings to build the strategic plan
- Establish a standing Strategic Planning Council with monthly cadence; embed membership as a cross-organizational goal, not a committee project
- Audit non-member event pricing & recalibrate differential to approximate one year’s dues
- Migrate from calendar-year to anniversary-year dues to reduce renewal friction and improve member experience
- Develop 3–5 targeted value propositions for distinct psychologist segments, not a single generic pitch.

Large SPTA

California Psychological Association (CPA)

Michael Changaris, PsyD — CPA President-Elect

Overview: CPA operates in the largest and most complex psychology marketplace in the country, serving a statewide community across 7 regions, 7 divisions, 16 chapters, 12+ committees, and 4 APA national initiatives. Its membership growth framework is driven by a three-axis model, Workforce, Service Need, and Growth, that helps CPA leadership prioritize where to focus resources and how to articulate value to the full diversity of California’s psychology community.

CPA at a Glance: Organizational Strengths

CPA’s scale and reach across California creates both distinctive challenges and distinctive advantages. The association’s four core organizational strengths are as below.

Table. CPA at a Glance: Organizational Strengths

Organizational Strength	What It Means in Practice
Scale & Reach	Large, diverse statewide membership spanning all practice settings
Leadership Excellence	High-functioning staff + engaged member leaders at chapter and division level
Advocacy Power	High-impact, effective government affairs team with direct legislative access
Network Strength	Distributed, community-based structure across all of California

The Growth Frame: Workforce + Service Need + Growth

CPA frames its membership strategy around three intersecting forces that define where psychology is moving in California:

WORKFORCE Supply, training pipeline, and demographic shifts in the psychology workforce	SERVICE NEED Mental health demand, gaps in care, underserved populations and communities	GROWTH Strategic expansion into emerging practice areas, roles, and settings
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The power of this framework is that it moves membership value beyond “what do you get as a member” toward “where is your profession going, and who is leading that charge.” This is particularly resonant for large-state associations where members may feel disconnected from institutional governance.

CPA’s Strength Across California: Structural Assets

CPA’s organizational infrastructure gives it capacity that no other California psychology organization can match.

Table. CPA’s Strength Across California: Structural Assets

Structural Asset	Number	Role
Regions	7	Address regional differences in access, workforce, and service demand
Divisions	7	Support specialty practice, professional identity, and clinical expertise
Chapters	16	Create local networks for connection, collaboration, and engagement
Committees	12+	Drive advocacy, standards, and strategic initiatives
APA Initiatives	4	Extend reach through national advocacy, policy alignment, and coordinated action

CPA's member value proposition: "For California psychologists, CPA protects practice, increases income, and grows careers."

Challenges for Growing Membership

CPA's presentation was candid about the structural challenges facing a large, geographically fragmented state association:

- **Shifting Workforce:** From originally a majority private practice model to 48% private practice and 52% system-based (healthcare, hospitals, community MH), members in system settings receive CEs through employers and may see less direct value
- **Fragmented State:** Large geography, diverse needs across 7 regions, and multiple sub-groups with different priorities
- **Economic Pressure:** Reimbursement changes, billing complexity, and financial model disruptions affecting member practices
- **Education Shift:** CE moving toward competency-based, career-linked development — requiring CPA to evolve its CE strategy

Segmented Messaging: Tailoring 3 Core Packages

One possible innovation is considering segmented membership value packages. Rather than a single generic membership pitch. This could support CPA to tailor its message to different practice settings and career stages through three core packages.

Table. Segmented Messaging: Tailoring 3 Core Packages

1 PRACTICE TOOLS <i>(Activate)</i> Immediate Value • Low Friction	2 CONNECTION & GROWTH <i>(Retain)</i> Engagement • Career Development	3 FUTURE OF PRACTICE <i>(Transform)</i> Leadership • System Impact
All-in-one practice resource hub CE for billing, IBH, and AI Monthly policy updates Clear membership value (ROI)	Structured career pathways Mentorship + peer cohorts Peer cohorts by specialty and practice setting Member savings / ROI tools	Unlimited CE library (on-demand) CE to improve billing & care Advocacy alerts (1-click action) Policy to income dashboard

FOCUS: Immediate tools that support daily practice and income.	FOCUS: Connection, retention, and career advancement.	FOCUS: Leadership, advocacy, and system-level impact.
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This segmentation strategy is underpinned by a member value pyramid that identifies what matters most to members:

- High Impact (The Membership Contract): Advocacy (97.8%), Resources (94.2%), Continuing Education (91.3%)
- Medium Impact (Strategic Enhancements): ROI Clarity (68%), Conferences (60.3%), Leadership Pipelines (59.6%)
- Latent Value (Underutilized Assets): Career Tools (47.5%), Recognition (34.6%)

Member Lifecycle: A Four-Stage Engagement Model

CPA frames long-term membership as a progression through four engagement stages, each with distinct value propositions and time horizons:

Table. Member Lifecycle: A Four-Stage Engagement Model

1 Activate Tools  0–12 months Practice tools, CE, resource hub, policy updates	2 Connect Network  1–3 years Peer cohorts, mentoring, conferences, early leadership roles	3 Advance Career  3–7 years Leadership pathways, specialization, career growth	4 Influence Impact  7+ years Advocacy, leadership roles, mentoring, field-shaping initiatives
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The lifecycle model shifts retention strategy from renewal-focused to relationship-focused. A member who stays for 7+ years becomes an advocate, leader, and ambassador, the most powerful driver of new membership.

Serving California's Diverse Communities

While CPA membership strategy is still in development, this community strategy presented is grounded in local chapters while aligned with statewide priorities. Two key initiatives illustrate this:

Table. Serving California's Diverse Communities

Rural County Chapter	Big Picture Shifts
Localized leadership and representation for rural counties	Workforce shift from majority to private practice to the reality of current membership 48% private practice and 52% system-based
Bringing resources, advocacy, and education closer to home	Economic pressure: reimbursement, billing, and financial changes
Building connection and visibility in underserved areas	Education shift: CE → competency-based, career-linked development
Rural Access • Local Support • Stronger Together	Fragmented state: diverse needs across geography and subgroups

Impacts of Growth Efforts to Date

CPA's recent growth initiatives have produced measurable results across multiple dimensions:

- **Advocacy Growth:** Lobby Day more than doubled in 3 years (~90 attendees); expanded access via funded travel and lodging
- **Community Presence:** Growing Pride events through committee leadership; broader representation in the profession
- **Member Engagement:** New Frontiers Summit + Membership Committee expansion, creating new touchpoints
- **Learning Infrastructure:** Expanding on-demand CE library to meet the shift toward flexible, self-paced learning
- **Policy Wins:** Intern billing progress; protecting therapy from misuse of AI — concrete legislative victories members can point to

New Frontiers Summit: A Case Study in Membership-Driven Programming

The New Frontiers Summit represents CPA's most fully developed example of using a signature event to simultaneously grow membership, generate revenue, and build community. Goals, successes, and challenges are documented below.

Summit Founder and Presenter: *Stephanie Smith, PsyD* is a licensed clinical health psychologist based in Sacramento, California, where she maintains a private practice specializing in psychological assessment. She has served on CPA Board as Membership Chair.

Table. New Frontiers Summit: A Case Study in Membership-Driven Programming

Summit Goals	Summit Successes
Increase CPA membership, especially among Kaiser psychologists and system-based practitioners	Attracted new psychologists; encouraged digital members to upgrade their membership level
Rebrand CPA as the link between the psychology profession and Sacramento legislators	Exceeded financial expectations in revenue generated
Improve CPA's reputation and create a more inclusive, positive organizational culture	Surpassed attendance goals, both in total attendees and new participants
Help new members find their "home" within CPA through divisions or committees	Received strongly positive survey results and verbal feedback from attendees
	Divisions expressed enthusiasm about collaborating together under one event

	Successfully launched CPA's first social media campaign featuring videos, with strong audience engagement
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Summit results: through this one event, CPA grew membership and generated \$24,212 in new revenue.

Table. Summit results

Member Type	# of New Members	Annual Rate	Total Revenue
Students	6	\$50.00	\$300
Professional Members (all types)	54	\$395.00	\$21,330
Upgraded Membership	14	\$184.00	\$2,582
TOTAL			\$24,212

Summit challenges identified for future improvement:

- Entire workload on one person (membership committee chair) — all copy, emails, video editing, and graphic design
- No budget for marketing/content, requiring a broad specialized skill set
- Very short lead time (~2 months) during the holiday season to build and warm the audience
- No year-round social media presence — starting each year with a “cold audience”
- Lack of targeted marketing limits reach to key groups (e.g., Kaiser psychologists)
- Kaiser-focused video had high views but low conversion to new sign-ups

- Potential saturation risk from CP/A Foundation’s separate December summit — opportunity to collaborate

Growth Opportunities for Large SPTAs

- Map the Workforce–Service Need–Growth triangle annually; use it to identify emerging practice areas where non-member psychologists are concentrated
- Adopt the 3-package segmented messaging model; develop distinct value propositions for Activate (tools), Retain (connection), and Transform (leadership) audiences
- Build the 4-stage member lifecycle into retention strategy; shift from renewal-focused to relationship-focused engagement
- Invest in visible legislative and regulatory advocacy, then ensure non-members know about it — demonstrating value to those who have not yet joined is essential at scale
- Develop partnerships with training programs to recruit pre-licensure and early-career practitioners before institutional identity forms elsewhere
- Institutionalize the Summit model: dedicate a full-time or part-time staff resource to social media and event marketing year-round rather than sprint-building before each event
- Explore collaboration with the CP/A Foundation on summit programming to avoid audience saturation and share organizational costs

Insights from HPA

Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA)

Raymond Folen, PhD — HPA Executive Director | Avatar Presentation, April 26 2026

Overview: Raymond Folen’s avatar video presentation (6 min 22 sec) provided a small-SPTA perspective from Hawaii that complements and enriches the panel discussion. HPA’s membership strategy is built on an unusually high volume of free continuing education (CE) programming delivered in partnership with the Hawaii Behavioral Health Connection (HiBHC), paired with a data-driven direct recruitment campaign and a mission-first messaging framework.

Free CE as a Membership Engine

HPA has addressed one of the most persistent challenges in small-association membership growth: how to offer compelling benefits with limited budget. Their partnership model with HiBHC creates a CE pipeline that few comparable associations can match.

Table. Free CE as a Membership Engine

Organization	Programs (2025)	CE Hours
HPA	27	33
HiBHC	26	118
Total	53	151

Context nationally: the number of free CE offerings per year across SPTAs ranges from 0 to 24, with 15 SPTAs offering none at all. HPA’s 33 CE hours through HPA alone places it in the top tier nationally — an outlier benchmark for small associations. HPA’s Grand Rounds series (monthly, noon–1PM, free for members and HiBHC volunteers) and Clinical Case Consultation programming are high-value, low-cost benefits that simultaneously serve the profession and demonstrate HPA’s value to non-members.

Do Free CEs Cannibalize Paid Events? The Evidence Says No.

Folen addressed this question directly: yes, the free CE benefit enhances both recruitment and retention; and no, offering free CEs does not reduce attendance at paid events. In fact, regular free CE programming appears to create a culture of ongoing engagement, which has resulted in increased participation in paid events.

- Yes: the free CE benefit actively enhances membership recruitment and retention, demonstrating ongoing association value to members and prospective members alike
- No: free CE does not reduce paid event attendance. Regular free programming builds a culture of ongoing engagement that has led to increased participation in paid events

Data-Driven Recruitment: Reaching Non-Members Directly

Because state licensing boards publish basic information on all licensed psychologists, SPTAs can build direct non-member outreach lists. The data below reflects responses from 26 SPTAs and shows the contact information fields typically available from state agencies:

Table. Data-Driven Recruitment: Reaching Non-Members Directly

Data Available from State Agency	Coverage Rate
Names	100%
Physical Address	77%
Email Address	46%
Phone Number	23%

For contact gaps, HPA supplements with commercial background-check and people-search services to obtain email addresses and phone numbers. This creates a near-complete outreach file for direct membership recruitment.

Advocacy-Based Membership Messaging

HPA's most compelling recruitment message is built around professional protection, not transactional benefits. The "Who's Protecting Your Practice?" campaign communicates:

- HPA spends hundreds of hours annually meeting with legislators and policymakers to protect scope of practice and practitioner autonomy
- Every licensed psychologist in Hawaii has already benefited from HPA's advocacy work, whether or not they are members

- Membership is positioned as joining the team already protecting their practice — \$350/year framed as “less than 2 hours of your time”

This framing is highly transferable across SPTA sizes. It reframes membership from a transactional “what do I get” to a civic and professional responsibility: “who is protecting my future.”

Growth Opportunities for Small SPTAs (HPA Model)

- Build or formalize a CE partnership with a complementary behavioral health organization to dramatically increase free CE output with shared costs
- Obtain the state licensee database and supplement with commercial tools to build a complete non-member outreach list
- Develop a “Who Is Protecting Your Practice” advocacy-based message campaign tailored to your state’s current legislative landscape
- Launch Grand Rounds or monthly clinical consultation programming as a high-visibility free member benefit that also demonstrates value to non-members
- Price membership at \$350/year or below and anchor the ask relative to time, not money (“less than two hours of your professional billing rate”)

Cross-Cutting Themes & Recommendations

The following strategies apply regardless of SPTA size and represent the most consistent, high-confidence findings from both the panel presentation, the CPA slides, and the video content.

1

Make the Value Visible: Members do not join or stay because value exists — they join because they understand and feel it. This requires active, repeated, and personalized communication. CPA’s segmented 3-package model and KPA’s value articulation pillar both reflect this principle. Associations that assume members know what they receive are systematically underperforming on retention.

2

Design for the Non-Member: Every touchpoint with non-members — events, email outreach, CE programming, advocacy victories — is a membership conversion opportunity. CPA’s New Frontiers Summit, HPA’s free Grand Rounds, and TPA’s pricing strategy all design non-member interactions with conversion in mind. Associations that do this grow faster.

3

Reduce Friction at Every Stage: Joining should be easy. Renewing should be easier. TPA’s anniversary-year dues shift, KPA’s clear onboarding expectations, and HPA’s direct non-member outreach are all friction-reduction in practice. Map the member journey and identify every point where a prospective or current member might disengage.

4

Embed Membership in Strategic Planning: Membership growth is not a committee responsibility — it is an organizational outcome that depends on every function of the association. TPA’s monthly Strategic Planning Council is the most fully realized expression of this principle. CPA’s Workforce-Service Need-Growth framework embeds the same logic into strategic decision-making at scale.

5

Use Advocacy as a Recruitment Asset: The psychologists who are not members of your association have already benefited from your work. Make sure they know it. HPA’s “Who’s Protecting Your Practice?” frame and CPA’s Lobby Day growth (doubling to ~90 attendees in 3 years) both demonstrate that visible advocacy is the strongest case for membership that most SPTAs never fully leverage.

6

Pursue Strategic Partnerships: HPA’s HiBHC partnership demonstrates that small associations can punch far above their weight in benefit delivery by aligning with complementary organizations. Four APA national initiatives and its exploration of CPA Frontiers summit collaboration reflect the same principle at large-association scale.

7

Think in Lifecycles, Not Renewal Cycles: 4-stage member lifecycle model, Activate, Connect, Advance, Influence, represents the most sophisticated articulation of long-term membership strategy in the deck. Every SPTA should map its own member lifecycle and build programming, communications, and value offers to each stage. Members who progress through the lifecycle become the association’s most powerful growth engine.

Conclusion

The strategies documented in this report represent a high-quality, field-tested body of practice from association leaders who have achieved real membership growth under real constraints. None of the approaches described here requires large budgets, staff expansion, or technological sophistication. What they require is intentionality, consistency, and a genuine commitment to making the case for professional association membership every day.

The opportunity in psychology association membership is significant: across most states, the majority of licensed psychologists are not members of their state association. Closing even a fraction of that gap — through the strategies documented here — would materially strengthen the profession's advocacy capacity, financial sustainability, and ability to shape the environments in which psychologists practice.

Small, medium, and large SPTAs face different constraints and opportunities, but the core message is the same: membership grows when associations are excellent at what they do, are clear about why it matters, and make it easy for psychologists to say yes. Version 3 of this report enriches the Large SPTA section with full strategic framework, including segmented messaging packages, the member lifecycle model, the New Frontiers Summit case study, and the Workforce-Service Need-Growth decision framework, providing the most complete picture of large-SPTA membership strategy available from this event.

Report compiled from Division 31 Town Hall
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