



WISHLIST:



Board Brief

Designed for Club Board of Directors
May 2025

WHAT'S HOT:

What Do Members Want? The Top Seven Priorities

Club members today want more, better, and sooner and 79 percent expect their spending at the club to remain the same. This is no surprise to most club leaders who regularly seek greater insight and understanding from their members. *The 2024 Club Members' Perspective Report* produced by GGA Partners provides a seven-part checklist for club leaders to consider in 2025.

What do members want?

Dining Experiences: Improve the quality, consistency, and variety of food, create more casual dining options, enhance outdoor dining spaces, consider themed dinner and special events, and address inconsistent service. Club managers across the globe emphasize the importance of experience beyond the great food from their kitchen.

Golf Course and Practice Facilities: Continual emphasis on maintaining and improving the golf course, enhance the practice facilities, including driving range, short game areas, and golf simulators.

Clubhouse and Facilities: Renovate and upgrade locker rooms, bathrooms, and lounge areas, evaluate indoor amenities like a fitness center or spa, focus on maintaining a high standard of cleanliness and décor and consider a more sustainable approach.

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CLUB
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Member Experience: Increase communication with members, offer more member events and activities, cater to a wider range of age groups. The members' experience is many things that begin with the personal recognition of the club's members.

Social and Recreational Facilities: Add recreational amenities that provide more opportunities for social interaction. Family-friendly amenities like playgrounds, kids' areas, or other activities to create greater interaction are most popular currently.

Service and Staff: Improve booking systems and better communication with members, maintain a high level of professionalism among staff, provide ongoing training in customer service, and improve transparency in club management.

Environmental Sustainability and Initiatives: Members value environmental initiatives, such as adopting electric vehicles and reducing plastic waste.

The Club Members' Perspective Report is part of GGA Partners' research initiative intended to understand what key stakeholders currently see and what the future holds for an increasingly complex and exciting area of the hospitality business. This research series explores unique views from within the private club, golf, resort, and residential community segments. 

Submitted by Henry DeLozier, Partner, GGA Partners.





BY THE NUMBERS:

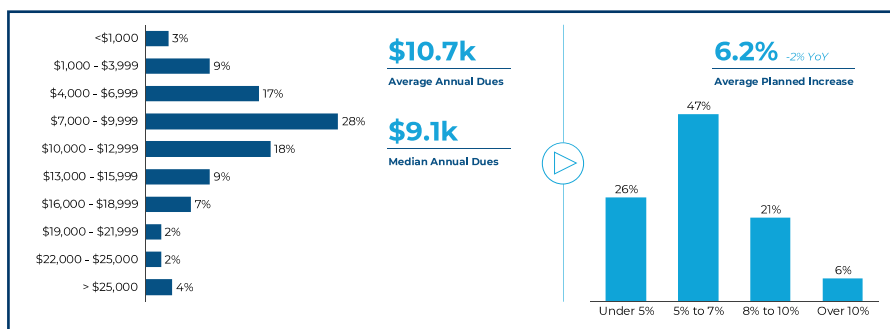
Operating Dues and Financial Risks in Clubs

GGA Partners has again teamed up with the CMAA Research Committee to administer a research survey for members of the Association. The survey—*Club Leader's Perspective Report*—serves as a contemporary update on the pressing needs of CMAA managers and looks at emerging trends and challenges from the perspective of those in club management.

This report was initially designed to gauge the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on club operations and has evolved to review its ripple effects into 2024 and beyond. The research results will help club managers and their boards better prepare for the next normal. We'll continue to look at data regarding strategy in this edition—but you can find more data in the full report.

Operating Dues Grow

Annual operating dues continue to grow—but slower than initiation fees. The average planned increase is approximately 6.2 percent, down 2 percent from last year's numbers. This increase is due primarily to the need to cover expected growth in expenses.

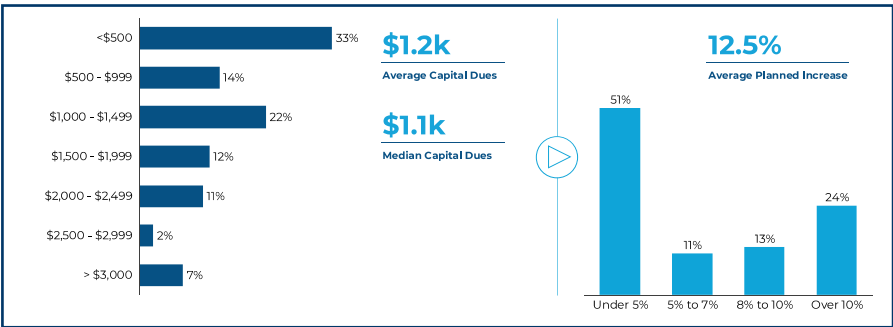


Operating dues are still growing to cover the increased costs of club operations. However, unlike initiation fees, there isn't a substantial difference between the average and median operating dues. This indicates that while some clubs have been able to increase their cost of entry substantially, these same clubs are showing restraint in passing along operating costs to their current members.

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Capital Dues Will Increase

The average capital dues represent approximately 10 percent of operating dues, while the expected average increase will double the 6 percent increase in operating dues. This indicates that clubs are taking advantage of this funding source to help fund club improvements.

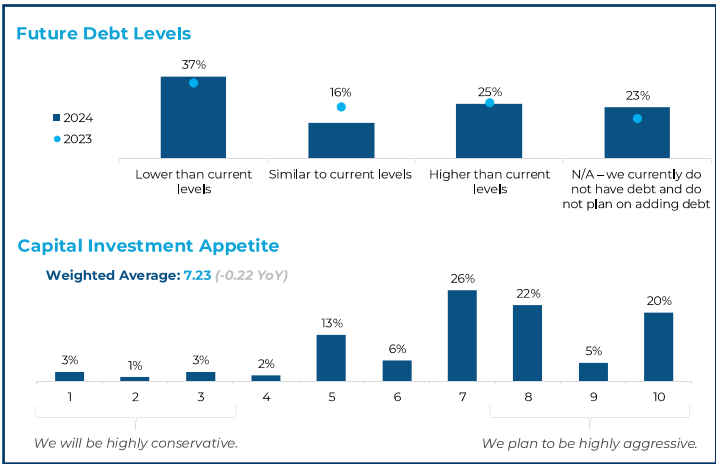


Unlike initiation fees and operating dues, the distribution of clubs leveraging this mechanism doesn't follow the norm. Current ranges and use of this mechanism lean to the lower end of the financial spectrum, indicating there is still room to expand this financing tool, especially for clubs with higher operating dues and initiation fees.

Capital Investment Perceptions

Clubs with annual revenues that exceed \$10 million were far more likely to be "highly aggressive" in their capital investment. However, there was no significant difference in expected future debt levels based on club revenue, as funding methods for capital investment were consistent across different club profiles.

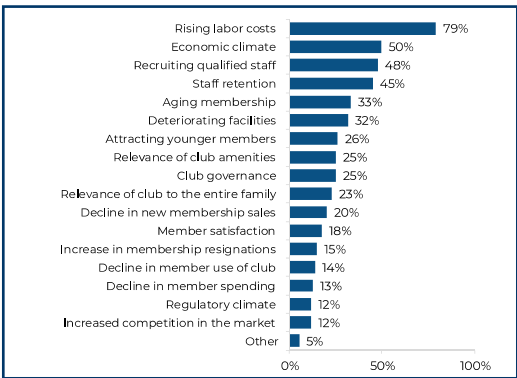
Results here were very similar to last year.



Financial Risks to the Club

While rising labor costs and staff retention remain important risks, new challenges have emerged. The economic climate and recruiting staff join labor costs and staff retention as the top tier of financial risks identified by club leaders.

Concerns about rising labor costs dropped by 13 percent compared to last year, and retention dropped by a substantial 23 percent. While other areas were also rated lower, the cost associated with employees remains a leading concern for leaders.



CMAA members may access their complimentary copy of the full report from [GGA Partners](#).





INSIGHTS:

What If We Thought Differently?

In club leadership, we often operate in a reactionary cycle, responding to what's directly in front of us: a staff resignation, a last-minute member request, a change in vendor pricing, or a board directive. We get so used to solving what's urgent that we don't always make space to imagine what's possible.

Scenario planning offers a way to shift that. It's a strategic tool, yes, but more importantly, it's a mindset. It helps us ask: What could happen next and how might we prepare or respond with intention?

Unlike forecasting or goal setting, scenario planning doesn't assume one single outcome. It stretches your thinking into multiple paths, challenging assumptions and opening your organization to agility, innovation, and resilience.

Let's look at how you can use scenario planning in everyday operations, plus some questions to help you think through.

What if we planned for growth, not just gaps?

Succession planning is often reactive, triggered by a resignation, retirement, or emergency. But the strongest clubs treat succession planning as a long-term talent development strategy.

What if?

- The club adds 100 new members over the next two years. Which roles would need to evolve?
- The AGM leaves. Do we have a "bench" ready?
- Our current supervisors aren't interested in leadership. Are we grooming the right people?

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Succession isn't about a single replacement plan; it's about building capacity. Clubs should create development pathways that expose emerging talent to broader responsibility. That might include rotational department assignments, mentorship programs, or stretch projects that test leadership readiness in low-risk environments.

At one club we worked with, the team started thinking through leadership attrition, not because anyone was planning to leave, but just to be prepared. That sparked the idea of building an internal group of high-potential employees, and now that group is shaping the next generation of leaders at the club.

For reflection:

- Who are the top three people we're actively preparing for future leadership roles?
- What would our leadership team need to look like in five years, and what are we doing today to build that?
- Are we identifying successors only when someone leaves, or thinking a few steps ahead?

What if we designed teams instead of filling roles?

Traditional hiring focuses on replacing what's been lost, often by duplicating the previous employee's skills or experience. But scenario thinking invites us to ask: What does the team need most now, and what could strengthen us long-term?

What if?

- We hire a generalist with high cross-functional potential instead of a narrow specialist?
- We redesign a full-time role into two part-time positions to attract diverse candidates?

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- We prioritize emotional intelligence and leadership traits over technical experience in our next manager hire?


Scenario planning helps you think more holistically, not about job titles, but about team composition. It pushes you to analyze gaps in capability, collaboration, and adaptability. This approach might also shift your focus toward internal development, especially if you consider scenarios where external hiring becomes difficult due to labor shortages or budget constraints.

For reflection:

- Are we hiring to replace what was lost, or to strengthen what's next?
- How could our hiring strategy support our long-term succession planning?
- What capabilities (not just competencies) are missing from our current team dynamic?

Final Thoughts

Scenario planning doesn't require a crystal ball. It simply asks you to lead with imagination, to step out of routine thinking, and explore possibilities with intention. It invites you to think not just about what's next, but about what else could be.

Start with one question at your next leadership meeting: **"What if we thought differently?"** You might be surprised by what opens up. 

Insights by Michelle Cocita, Director of Organizational Strategy & Client Success, Strategic Club Solutions.





EXTERNAL INFLUENCES:

Seasonal Worker H-2B Visa Update

Strong demand continues for H-2B visas, used by clubs and other seasonal operations to meet ongoing staffing needs. On March 26, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that it had received sufficient petitions to exhaust the standard supply of 33,000 H-2B visas for the second half of FY2025 on March 5. This triggered the release of supplemental FY2025 visas for returning workers. It retroactively announced that the supplemental visas allocated for the early second half of FY2025 became available on March 20. It immediately began accepting petitions for the additional 19,000 visas made available to returning workers with start dates of April 1 through May 14.

On April 23, USCIS announced that it had received sufficient petitions to exhaust the supplemental H-2B visas allocated for the early second half of FY2025 as of April 18.

On April 21, USCIS began accepting petitions for the additional 5,000 visas made available to returning workers with start dates in the late second half of FY2025, defined as May 15 to September 30.

USCIS also updated the number of supplemental FY2025 country-specific visas remaining for nationals of Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras. As of April 17, there are 6,796 of the original 20,000 visas still available.

For the latest availability information, visit the [Fiscal Year 2025 H-2B Cap Count webpage](#). 





CMAA NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Summits: Education for All Club Professionals

CMAA offers a robust series of Summits designed to advance the development of professionals working across the club and concentrating on specific subject matter. These highly focused events deliver deep dives into critical areas of club operations, providing an unmatched opportunity for hands-on learning, networking, and strategic thinking.

CMAA Summits focus on key operational areas such as communications, fitness/wellness, food & beverage, human resources, leadership, and membership & marketing. Attendees engage with top industry experts, explore emerging trends, and share best practices with peers from across the country. Whether it's navigating evolving member expectations or mastering innovative business models, each Summit is crafted to give attendees practical tools and insights they can immediately apply at their clubs.

Summits are tailored to ensure participants leave inspired, informed, and better equipped to lead their clubs to new heights. With a focus on smaller, more intimate group settings, these events also allow for meaningful networking, where participants can build lasting relationships with peers and thought leaders.

Annual offerings include:

Communications Summit – Held annually in the spring, this popular Summit is designed for club communications and marketing professionals. The 2026 Communications Summit will be held in Nashville, TN, April 13–16.

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Club Wellness Summit – Held annually in the summer, this Summit is designed for club wellness professionals and leaders who are interested in learning about how to integrate a variety of wellness offerings into their clubs. The 2025 Club Wellness Summit will be held at Quail Creek Country Club in Naples, FL, July 28–31.

Membership & Marketing Summit – Held annually in the summer, this popular Summit is designed for membership and marketing professionals. The 2025 Membership & Marketing Summit will be offered virtually on August 5–6.

HR Summit – Held annually in August, this Summit designed specifically for human resources professionals and those interested in focusing on the club's people and culture. The 2025 HR Summit will be held at The Landings in Savannah, GA, August 12–14.

Chef Summit – Held annually in the fall, this popular Summit brings club chefs from across the country together to elevate their business acumen and leadership skills. The 2025 Chef Summit will be held at The Club at Admirals Cove in Jupiter, FL, September 7–10.

By participating in CMAA's Summits, attendees not only enhance their individual expertise but also contribute to the overall strength and vibrancy of their club.

Learn more at cmaa.org/learn/meetings-and-events/.

