



NEWSLETTER



JANUARY 2026

www.azsae.org



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Tonya Deskins, CAE
2026 AzSAE President

Dear AzSAE Members,

As we start 2026, AzSAE is focusing on something simple and practical: **helping whole teams do their best work**. Associations are built on collaboration, yet membership has often been purchased one person at a time. This year we're aligning access with how you operate today. AzSAE is focusing on our purpose: relevant learning, a dependable peer network, and a place where association professionals, from coordinators to CEOs, can compare notes, build skills, and solve real problems together.

What's new?

- **Organizational (Group) Membership – \$500/year**
- One membership covers your association and allows you to **add multiple staff** under a single account. Billing is centralized, and each person gets their own login for programs, resources, and the members only directory.

Why should you enroll your team?

- Shared context, fewer bottlenecks. When more than one person hears the same guidance, decisions move faster and handoffs are cleaner across departments.
- Continuity and resilience. Vacations, vacancies, and role changes don't halt progress. Knowledge is distributed across your office—not parked with one individual.
- Cross functional growth. Staff hear how other associations solve similar challenges and bring back templates, checklists, and approaches your whole team can use.
- Leadership pipeline. Rotating staff through forums, committees, and CAE prep develops judgment and confidence while reducing succession risk.
- Administrative simplicity. One membership to manage; fewer one-off transactions and reimbursements.



AzSAE is a Community for All Association Professionals and those who serve the association industry.

Join Us!

Learn | Grow | Connect

<https://www.azsae.org/join>



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED....

How this benefits the CEO:

- Better decisions, faster. A team hearing the same examples and benchmarks means less time reexplaining context and more time aligning on action.
- Risk management. Broader exposure to ethics, finance, and governance topics reduces risk and raises the organization's overall knowledge base.
- Talent retention and morale. Professional development is a top reason staff stay. A visible pathway (from coordinator to director to CAE) strengthens culture and continuity.
- Succession and board readiness. Staff who regularly engage with peers and programs become steadier presenters, clearer writers, and more capable advisors to the CEO.
- Operational leverage. AzSAE's network shortens your path to answers—sample policies, vendor references, lessons learned—so your team spends less time reinventing.
- A dependable calendar. Predictable virtual and in person touchpoints help you plan participation across the year without disrupting mission critical cycles.

Make the most of membership:

1. Choose the right path: If you lead a team, select Organizational Membership (\$500) so multiple staff can be added under one account.
2. Plan participation: Put the regular virtual sessions and key in person dates on the team calendar now; rotate attendance to spread learning or attend together to team build.
3. Build the bench: Identify one emerging leader to join a committee or a workgroup this quarter; encourage CAE bound staff to tap AzSAE peers for study support.
4. Bring us your toughest problem: Use AzSAE to check a policy, an event format, a dues idea, or a tech decision. Someone nearby has tried it and will share what worked.

If you're already a member—thank you. If you're new or returning, welcome. Our aim is steady and clear: **help you lead well, develop people, and serve your members with confidence.**

Tonya Deskins, CAE
2026 AzSAE President



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Get Involved!

<https://www.azsae.org/getinvolved>

UPCOMING EVENTS



SAVE THE DATE

February 11 - 12, 2026

Communicating with Confidence in Divisive Times

Day 1
Wednesday, February 11, 2:00 PM (ET)

Day 2
Thursday, February 12, 2:00 PM (ET)

POSTPONED TO APRIL 22, 26



Speaker: Jen Hellman, communications expert, CEO of Goff Public

2.0 hour CAE Credit approved



azsae.org | 480-946-0119



REGISTER

Webinar

February 12, 2026

Thursday, Feb. 12
10:00 AM
Zoom

Topic: Evaluating Performance That Performs A Documented, Skills-Based Approach to Growth and Accountability

[Register Now](#)

Speaker: Jacqueline Mustoy

Members: No Fee | Nonmembers: \$50



Virtual Event



azsae.org | 480-946-0119

Approved for 1.0 hour CAE credit.



REGISTER

Webinar

March 10, 2026

Tuesday, March 10
9:00 AM

Strategic PR for Associations: Building Trust, Credibility, and Resilience

Speaker: David Leibowitz, President and Founder of Leibowitz Solo

Members: No Fee | Nonmembers: \$50

[Register Now](#)



Virtual Event



azsae.org | 480-946-0119

Approved for 1.0 hour CAE credit.

Scan to view more upcoming events



EVENTS

WHAT'S NEW?

VISIT OUR WEBSITE EVENTS GALLERY & PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS PAGE TO SEE YOURSELF AND YOUR COLLEAGUES ENJOYING THEMSELVES AT ONE OF OUR RECENT EVENTS

WELCOME
to AzSAE's Photo Gallery!

Click on an image to view full gallery of eventt

CURRENTLY FEATURING OUR 2025 AWARDS GALA!



Thank you

for hosting our
2025 Awards Gala



[Scholarships Information page on website](https://www.azsae.org/Scholarships)
<https://www.azsae.org/Scholarships>

Membership News

New Membership Type
Organization Membership
Applications are now open
Apply Today >>



President

Tonya Deskins, CAE
West and SouthEast REALTORS of the Valley

President-Elect

Deborah Rudd
Arizona Association of Community Managers

Treasurer

Pamela Frestedt, CAE
West and SouthEast REALTORS of the Valley

Past President

Patrick Farrey, CAE
Society of Plastics Professionals

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Lisa Zarda, CAE, CNAP
US Swim School Association

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Meghan Hyatt, CAE

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Doug Laher, CMP, CAE
Arizona Medical Association

Feliz Leyba
Caesars Entertainment

Elaine Starks
Power Paws Assistance Dogs

Joanne Winter
MPI/HSMAI

Jessica Young
Discover Flagstaff

Of Counsel

Alexis Firehawk, Esq
CHDB Law LLP

Scholarship Opportunity

EXCLUSIVE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY FOR AZSAE MEMBERS!



Thunderbird scholarship opportunity for

Arizona Society of Association Executives Members (AzSAE)

Thunderbird School of Global Management and AZSAE are excited to offer scholarships for the 2026 application cycle. Eligible members and their dependents can receive an application fee waiver and scholarship towards tuition for Thunderbird's Graduate Degrees.

[Learn More](#)

New & Renewed Members



Rich Cerino

Residence Inn-Courtyard by Marriott
Phoenix Downtown

Cathy Blake

Dawn Crawford
Tonya Deskins, CAE
Pamela Frestedt, CAE
Maribel Garcia
Roger Nelson, CAE
Alexandra Paddy
Liz Parks
Patsy Todd
Jennifer Vargas
WeSERV

Tracilyn Hobson

Arizona Naturopathic Medical Association

Meghan Hyatt, CAE

National Elder Law Foundation

Feliz Leyba

Caesars Entertainment

Parker Nelson

Avion Center

Lisa Zarda, CAE

United States Swim Association

Strategic Partner Spotlight



How Lawyers Support Arizona Nonprofit Corporations

Nonprofit corporations are vital to Arizona's communities, delivering services in the arts, education, health, social services, and beyond. By channeling charitable resources to public needs, nonprofits amplify volunteerism, steward donor intent, and foster civic innovation. Establishing and maintaining a compliant nonprofit, however, involves complex legal and regulatory requirements. Experienced counsel helps founders and boards navigate these demands so organizations can focus on mission-driven impact.

Legal Services for Nonprofits: Formation, Compliance, Governance, and Tax-Exempt Status

Arizona nonprofits benefit from legal guidance across the organizational life cycle:

- **Formation:** Lawyers advise on entity selection, prepare and file incorporation documents, and ensure that charitable purposes and structures align with state and federal requirements.
- **Compliance:** Counsel helps nonprofits meet ongoing state corporate obligations and federal regulatory expectations, establishing systems for timely filings and sound recordkeeping.
- **Governance:** Attorneys support boards in adopting governance frameworks, clarifying fiduciary duties, and implementing policies that promote accountability and effectiveness.
- **Tax-Exempt Status:** Legal guidance is critical for obtaining and maintaining recognition of exemption, aligning activities with exempt purposes, and managing unrelated business considerations.

Essential Documents: Articles, Bylaws, and Foundational Policies

Lawyers play a central role in drafting and refining the documents that define a nonprofit's legal and operational framework:

- **Articles of Incorporation:** Counsel drafts purpose and asset dedication provisions, identifies the statutory agent, and includes language necessary to support tax-exempt recognition and charitable operations.
- **Bylaws:** Attorneys tailor governance rules for board composition, officer roles, terms and elections, meetings and quorum, committees, conflicts of interest, and succession planning, ensuring clarity and consistency with Arizona law and the organization's practices.
- **Policies and Procedures:** Legal advisors prepare conflict of interest, document retention, whistleblower, gift acceptance, fiscal controls, grantmaking, and joint venture policies, aligning them with regulatory expectations and donor requirements.
- **Other Instruments:** Counsel assists with board resolutions, minutes protocols, fiscal sponsorship or affiliation agreements, and amendments to governing documents as the nonprofit evolves.

Strategic Partner Spotlight



CHDB Law

Condo | HOA | Defense | Business

Fundraising, Contracts, and Employment: Targeted Legal Advice

Nonprofits engage in activities that carry material legal risk; proactive legal advice reduces that risk:

- **Fundraising and Development:** Lawyers advise on charitable solicitation registration and disclosures, online and interstate fundraising considerations, donor acknowledgment and restrictions, restricted gifts, endowments, raffles and events, sponsorships, cause-related marketing, and grant compliance.
- **Contracts and Partnerships:** Counsel structures, reviews, and negotiates agreements with vendors, venues, grantees and subgrantees, fiscal sponsors, collaborators, and technology providers, addressing indemnity, insurance, intellectual property, privacy, and data security.
- **Employment and Volunteers:** Attorneys guide compliant hiring, classification of employees and independent contractors, wage-and-hour practices, handbooks and policies, performance management, separations, and volunteer or internship programs, including risk management and background screening practices.
- **Real Estate and Operations:** Legal support covers leases and facility use agreements, equipment purchases, licensing, risk transfer, and compliance with applicable local requirements.

Ensuring Compliance with State and Federal Regulations

Compliance is continuous. Lawyers help nonprofits:

- **Maintain Corporate Good Standing:** Track and file required corporate reports, maintain a registered agent, and keep accurate corporate records and minutes.
- **Safeguard Tax-Exempt Status:** Prepare or support exemption applications, advise on lobbying and political activity limits, monitor unrelated business income, and implement procedures to prevent private inurement or excess benefit transactions.
- **Meet Reporting Obligations:** Coordinate accurate and timely financial disclosures and annual information returns, and harmonize narratives and financials across public reports and donor communications.
- **Implement Governance Best Practices:** Train directors on fiduciary duties, oversee policy adoption and enforcement, and facilitate periodic governance reviews and conflict management.
- **Manage Investigations and Audits:** Prepare for and respond to regulator or funder inquiries, corrective action plans, and internal investigations when needed.

Conclusion: Legal Support as a Force Multiplier for Mission

With thoughtful legal guidance, Arizona nonprofit corporations can be formed efficiently, governed responsibly, and operated compliantly. Counsel helps leaders anticipate risks, protect tax status, steward resources, and build durable structures that earn public trust. By partnering with experienced nonprofit counsel, organizations strengthen their capacity to advance their missions effectively and sustainably.

Strategic Partner Spotlight



Since 1992, CHDB Law has been an industry leader and advocate serving community associations, business and individuals in Arizona and across the Southwest

CHDB Law is a full-service law firm providing tailored legal services for associations, businesses, and individuals.

We've been serving clients across Arizona and the Southwest for over three decades. With a team of nearly 40 attorneys and three offices based in Arizona, we have the capabilities and resources to tackle your legal challenges head-on. Our attorneys bring a wealth of experience. We draw on the diverse backgrounds of our attorneys across industries to bring creative solutions and practical business guidance to the table. At the end of the day, our focus is on using our legal skills and real-world experience to help your organization thrive.



CHDB Law headquarters, Tempe, AZ
Tempe, Arizona
1400 E Southern Ave
Suite 400,
Tempe, Arizona 85282
<https://www.chdbl.com/>

OTHER LOCATIONS

Tucson Area
Tucson, Arizona
1846 E Innovation Park Dr.
Oro Valley, Arizona 85755

CHDB Law LLP - Prescott, AZ
Prescott, Arizona
1550 Plaza West Drive
Prescott, Arizona 86303

Professional Development



Now is the perfect time to register for both the prep course and the exam!

- Course Dates: February 2 – April 20, 2026
- Registration Deadline: February 10, 2026 at 5:00 PM (EST)

Ideal For: Candidates familiar with CAE content who want a structured, accelerated prep experience

This 8-week, accelerated format includes weekly group sessions, targeted reading plans, test-taking strategies, and a 200-question simulated final exam – all structured to fit the needs of busy professionals.

In addition to the course deadline,

- Exam application deadline for the May 1–14, 2026,
- CAE exam window is February 20, 2026.

For more information and our AzSAE promo code visit: www.azsae.org/CAEprogram



AzSAE's Commitment to Educational Growth

AzSAE collaborates with various SAE associations and industry experts to offer a rich array of educational opportunities for our members. This partnership ensures optimal growth and timely application in our constantly evolving landscape.

Visit our website for more information [Professional Development](#)

ELearning through SeminarWeb

- **Live Webinars (2 per month)** – Access the latest trends & insights from top speakers nationwide.

70+ Self-Study Courses



Master the Fundamentals for Career Advancement in Association Management with QAS 2.0

QAS 2.0 - the Qualified Association Specialist (QAS) 2.0 Certificate Program provides anyone in the association industry, including CEOs, a broad base view of the key elements in running an association. QAS 2.0 is a refreshed and modernized version of the original program. With updated content, new speakers, timely topics, and an all-new design, QAS 2.0 reflects the current realities of association management and prepares professionals for what's next. [View Full Program](#)

AzSAE Coupon Code: AZQAS-SAE

STRATEGIC PARTNERS



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