



# **THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NADO) NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NADO RESEARCH FOUNDATION)**

**2020-2024 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**

Washington, D.C.

August 2019



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NADO)

## NADO RESEARCH FOUNDATION

### 2020-2024 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Washington, D.C.

August 2019

This report presents the strategic vision and action plan created for future organizational development of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the NADO Research Foundation. The report has been developed by Future IQ as part of the development of a five-year Strategic Action Plan based on input from the NADO Think Tank Summit workshop, organizational surveys, Board meetings, the October 2018 NADO Annual Training Conference, and the March 2019 NADO Washington Conference.

PREPARED BY:

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1967, the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) has advocated on Capitol Hill and across federal agencies for the nation's network of more than 500 Regional Development Organizations (RDOs). In 1988, the NADO Research Foundation was launched to provide education, research, and training for RDOs and their executive leadership, staff, and policy board members.

As NADO recently celebrated 50 years of services to its members, the organization's leadership decided to engage in a strategic visioning initiative to guide the future direction of NADO and the NADO Research Foundation. In recent years, the nation's RDOs have experienced an influx of new leadership. In addition, demand for services and requests for expanding scope of services from members continues to increase. These transformational changes provide an ideal opportunity for NADO and the NADO Research Foundation to better define our goals and to take a strategic look at how to best serve our members in years to come.

The foundation of this strategic visioning process is the direct input from our members over the last thirteen months through online surveys, face-to-face interviews, and a scenario-based Think Tank Summit with the Board of Directors.

NADO's leadership is committed to work with staff to implement the appropriate recommendations contained in this report. Our goal is to position NADO and the NADO Research Foundation to be innovative leaders of the nation's RDOs for the next 50 years.

Thank you to our members for participating in this important initiative!

Scott Koons, President  
North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Kevin Byrd, First Vice President  
New River Valley Regional Commission (VA)

Misty Crosby, Second Vice President  
Buckeye Hills Regional Council (OH)

Chris Fetzer, Treasurer  
Northern Arizona Council of Governments

Chris Brown, Secretary  
Ark-Tex Council of Governments (TX)

Doug Elliott, Immediate Past President  
East Central Iowa Council of Governments



*NADO's strategic planning process aimed to take a 'deep dive' into the NADO stakeholders' aspirations and apprehensions for the future of the organization.*

## 2.0 PROJECT TIMELINE AND ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

### 2.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS TIMELINE

NADO's strategic planning process took place from June 2018 to June 2019. The overall strategic planning process developed for NADO included three major principles:

- **Future Oriented.** The objective was to take a 'deep dive' into the future and design a process and implementation plan that draws together strategic foresight and preferred future outcomes specific to NADO.
- **People Focused.** The process aimed to offer maximum opportunity for board members and stakeholders to engage in meaningful and thoughtful discussion about the future. Four Board meetings, a Think Tank Summit, a Training Conference Plenary, planning calls with NADO staff, and two surveys were conducted to provide structured input.
- **Data Driven.** The planning work was anchored by extensive analysis of organizational dynamics and surveying of Board members, staff, and stakeholders.

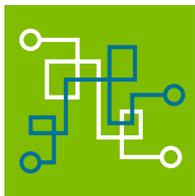
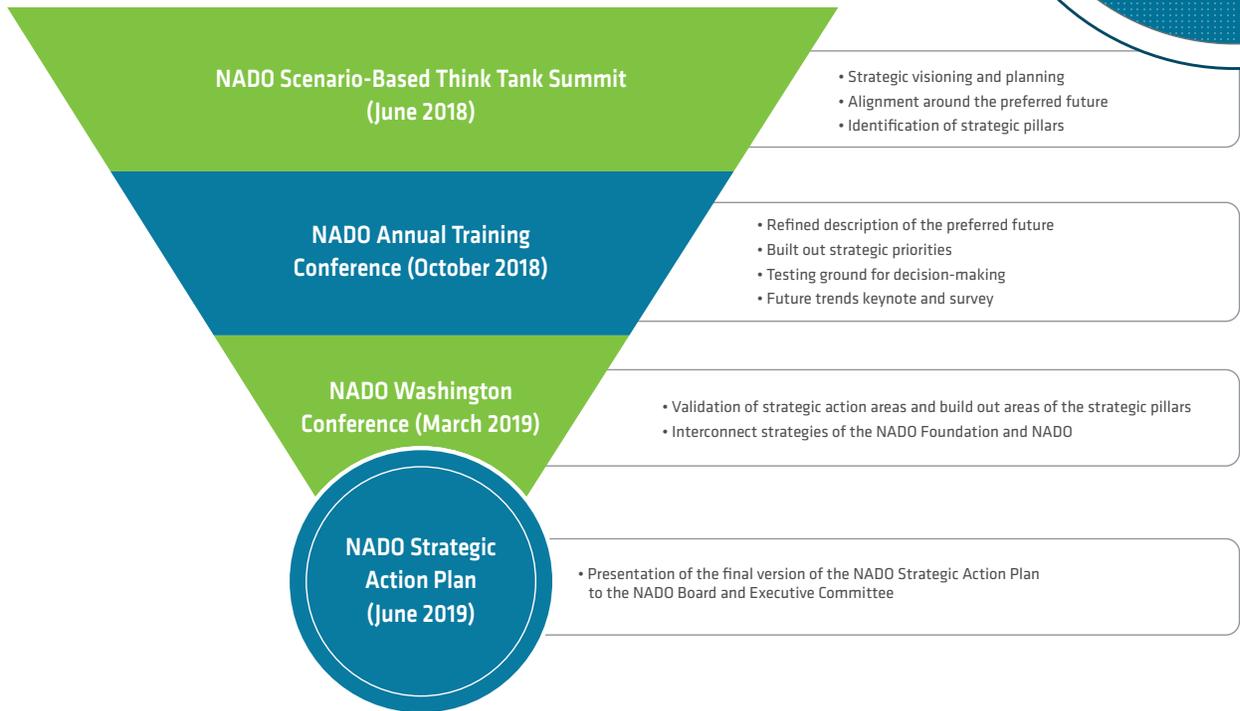
Two reports have been prepared as part of the NADO Strategic Planning process and may be downloaded at: <https://lab.future-iq.com/nado-strategic-visioning-and-planning-project/>



## 2.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

In order to build an organizational strategic plan that is supported by stakeholders, leadership and membership, NADO embarked on a participatory engagement process involving strategy meetings, Board meetings, an online pre-Think Tank Summit survey, a Think Tank Summit, a Training Conference Plenary with accompanying in-depth organizational preparedness survey, and numerous planning calls with NADO staff. This engagement was intended to create the foundation of support upon which a more targeted strategic plan could be developed to guide NADO and the NADO Research Foundation over the next five years.

*The engagement process involved hours of stakeholder time and commitment to planning for the future of NADO and the NADO Research Foundation.*



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**FUTURE INSIGHT:**

- The success of NADO's organizational strategic action plan will be dependent on continued strong NADO Board member leadership in its implementation.
- The aim of NADO's new organizational strategic action plan will be to provide guidance for NADO leadership decision-making over the next five years.





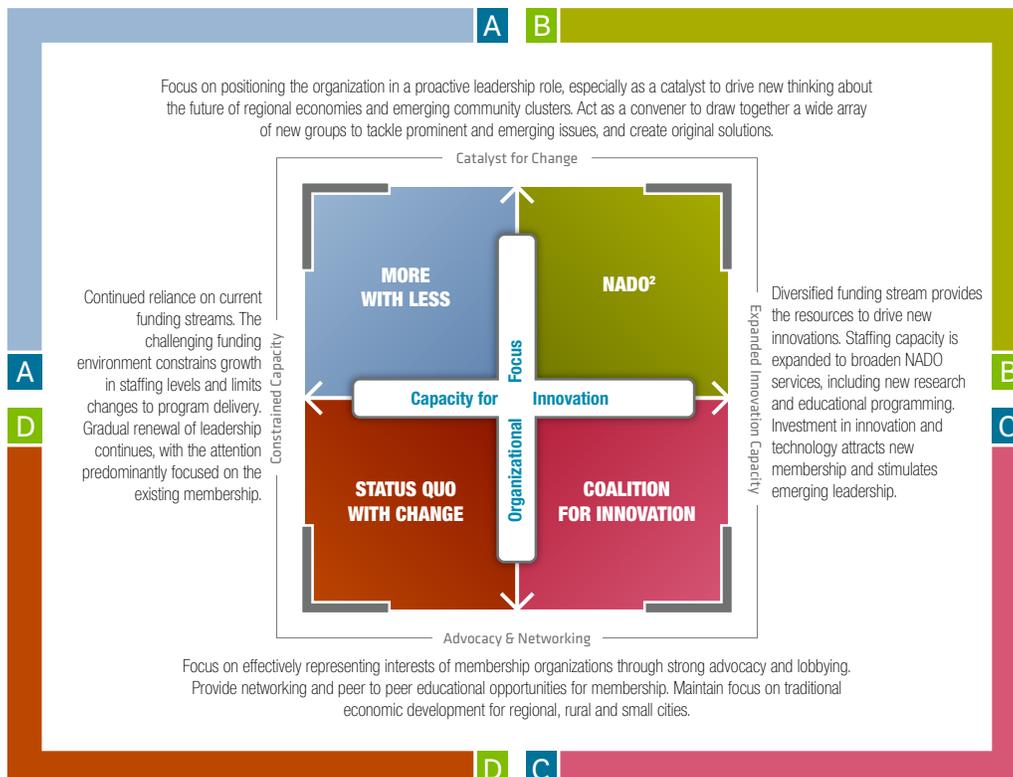
*The scenario planning process encourages curiosity and provides a way to explore plausible future scenarios and examine them from a speculative standpoint. They represent different possibilities for the future.*

### 3.0 CREATING SHARED VISION AND DIRECTION

The strategic planning process used a scenario planning methodology to explore future directions and implications. This approach helps stakeholders understand the full range of impacts and consequences of various decisions as they seek a preferred future.

#### 3.1 SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

The following diagram was developed with NADO Board members at the June 2018 NADO Summer Board Meeting. The scenario planning process creates four plausible versions of the future, built around the main themes of ‘Capacity for Innovation’ and ‘Organizational Focus’. The process allows stakeholders to think about the future in a multidimensional manner. More detail on the process is available in the National Association of Development Organizations Scenario-Based Think Tank Summit Report, June 2018. (For more information, visit: <https://lab.future-iq.com/nado-strategic-visioning-and-planning-project/>)



### 3.2 ALIGNMENT AROUND THE PREFERRED FUTURE

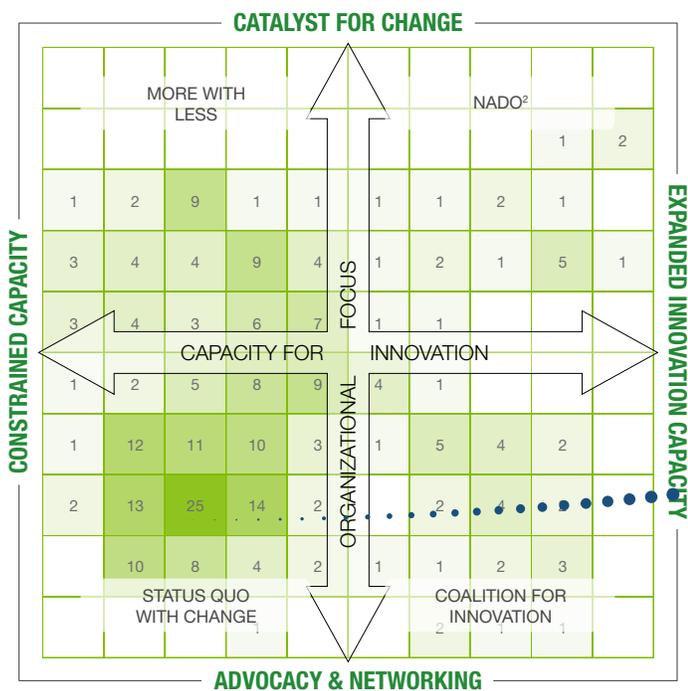
The four scenarios created by the Think Tank Summit participants represent a range of plausible outcomes for NADO. Workshop participants determined that Scenario D, Status Quo with Change, most represented the current direction of the organization if there is no change in current activities. While each of the scenarios were viewed as plausible, participants expressed a preference for Scenario B, NADO<sup>2</sup>. Emphasis was made, however, that movement from Scenario D to Scenario B would need to evolve through Scenario C to be sure to not lose NADO's traditional strengths in advocacy and networking capacities.

*The scenario planning process allowed stakeholders to think deeply about how to best lead their organization to suit current and future needs. It allows some anticipation and projection of future trends and explores how the organization may need to evolve to meet future needs.*

The preferred future NADO<sup>2</sup> outlines the basis of a shared vision of the future for NADO. It gives direction to the focus areas of action that will be needed for this vision to become a reality in NADO's new Strategic Action Plan.

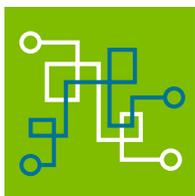
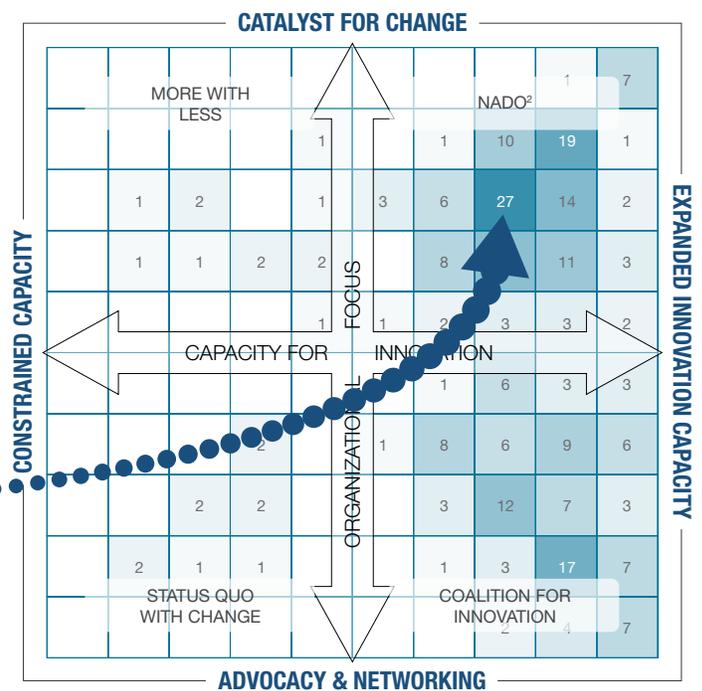
#### NADO SCENARIO PLANNING THINK TANK

EXPECTED FUTURE – 2030



#### NADO SCENARIO PLANNING THINK TANK

EXPECTED FUTURE – 2030



#### FUTURE INSIGHT:

- NADO Board members are aligned in their thinking that achieving the preferred future would require keeping the organization's advocacy role and that movement up the vertical axis would be considered additive, not in replacement.
- Throughout the planning process, key assets and actions were identified that will help lay out the road map to achieve the preferred future.

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*The emerging macro trends impacting regional areas represent both 'headwinds' and 'tailwinds' for NADO.*

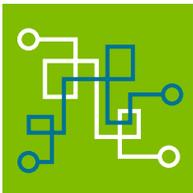
## 4.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

### 4.1 FORCES SHAPING THE FUTURE

At both the NADO Think Tank Summit in June 2018 and the Annual Training Conference in October 2018, participants explored four areas of emerging macro trends and the forces of change shaping the future of NADO and the NADO Research Foundation. Perceptions around the nature of impact of these trends, both in terms of size and timing of impact, were explored to gauge how important participants consider the trends. Participants discussed the emerging trends on global, regional and local scales, and related them directly to NADO in terms of how well prepared they considered themselves. Specifically, the trend areas were:

- Demographics, population and mass urbanization
- Energy, food, water and changing climate
- Changing macro-economics and societal values
- Technology and the next industrial revolution

Of particular relevance to the discussion on trends is the speed and scale of change occurring. Newly developed innovations are being implemented globally and locally at all scales, thereby changing the face of industries and society in a rapid and profound way. Manufacturing is at the forefront of this transformation, but other industries are also quickly developing such as agriculture, health care, biomedical research, infrastructure, energy, transportation and mobility, shipping and logistics, food services, retail, financial services, and tourism.



**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

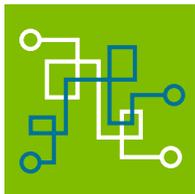
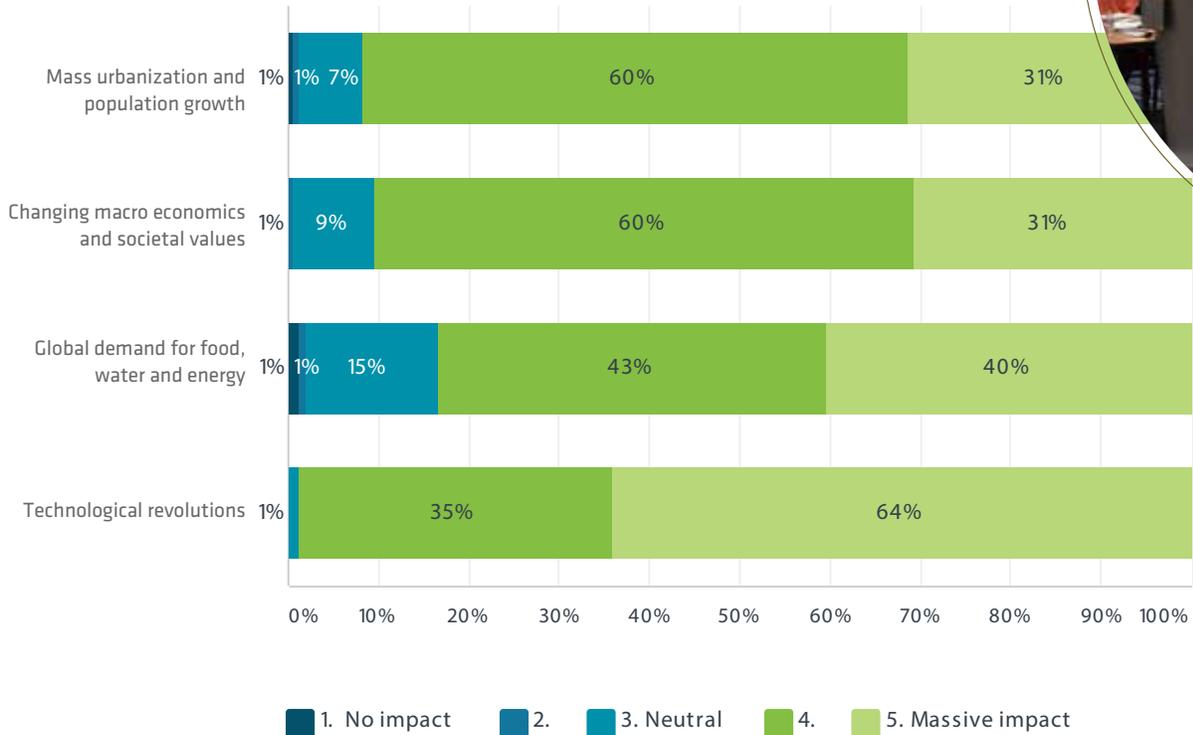
- Given global trends, there may be 'winners' and 'losers' based on geographic location. Regional collaboration will provide opportunities to leverage assets such as energy, food and water for economic development.
- In the face of the accelerating speed of change, the key to resiliency is the ability to anticipate change and remain agile.

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### 4.1.1 OVERALL MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE

To measure how significant the survey respondents considered the impact of change made by emerging global trends, October 2018 Annual Training Conference survey respondents were asked how large an impact they thought emerging trends will have on regional areas in the United States in the next 10 years. Technology changes were seen to have the greatest impact.

**In the next 10 years, how large an impact do you think the following emerging trends will have on regional areas in the USA? (n=156)**



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**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- Providing programming that will help NADO stakeholders adjust to emerging global trends will become a necessary component of NADO services to members.
- The acceleration of technology advances has the potential to be a double-edged sword for economic development, most significantly impacting workforce development.

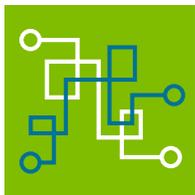
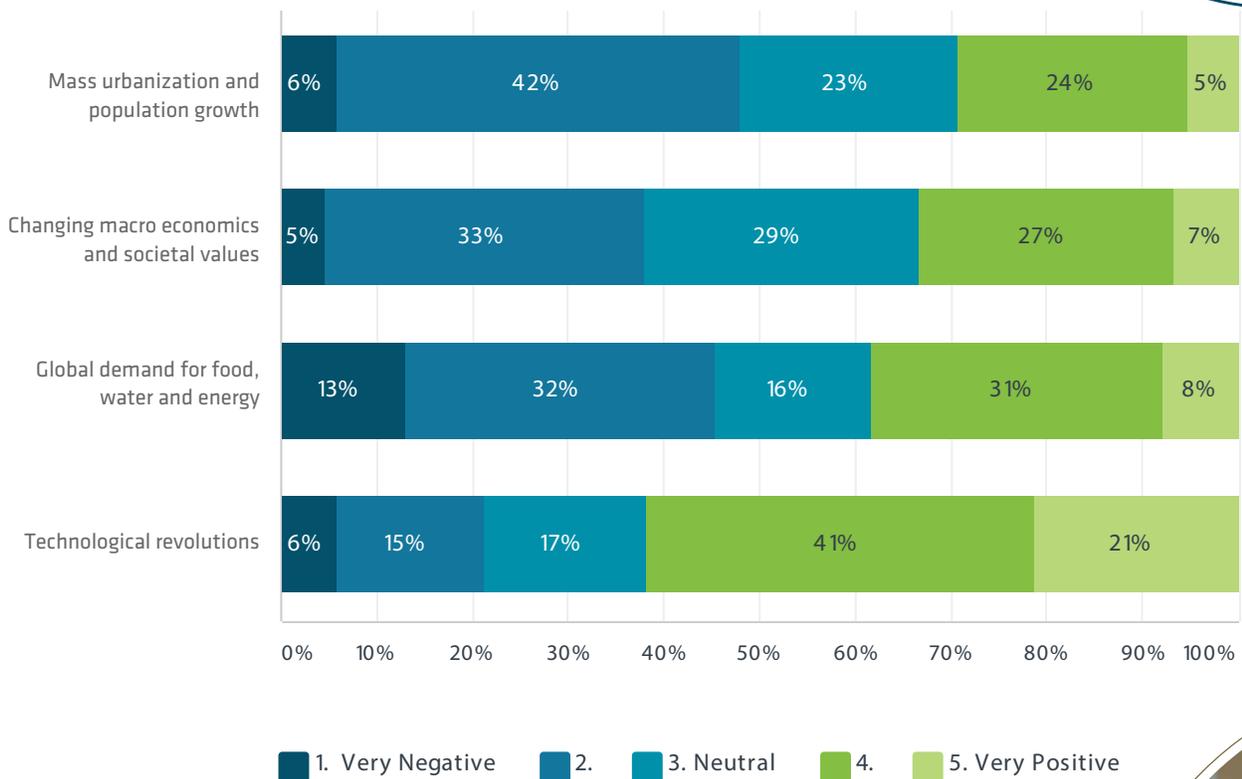
*Emerging global trends will have an outsized impact on regional areas in the U.S. How NADO retains its relevancy to its members will depend on how the organization is able to be agile, responsive and forward-looking.*

### 4.1.2 OVERALL NATURE OF IMPACT

In order to understand how macro trends would impact regional areas in the United States, 2018 Annual Training Conference participants were asked whether they thought the impacts would be negative or positive in nature. Revolutions in technology were seen as the most positive impacts and the global demand for food, water and energy were seen as the most negative.

*The nature of the impact of macro trends on regional areas in the United States is greatly dependent on geographic location.*

#### What do you think will be the nature of the impact (Negative or Positive) of these macro trends on regional areas in the USA? (n=155)



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#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- Managed well, revolutions in technology have the potential to positively impact regional areas in the United States. This will require consistent education for NADO members on the opportunities such advancements might provide in various industry sectors.
- Mass urbanization and demographic changes in both rural and urban areas will impact regional development by requiring expansion of services, housing options and infrastructure.

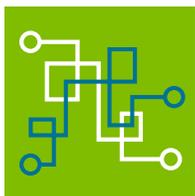


## 4.2 REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS

Preparedness is an important step in building resiliency into any strategic planning for the future. Preparedness provides leadership with the flexibility and agility they need to deal with rapidly changing dynamics confronting communities and regions. To gauge how 2018 Annual Training Conference survey respondents considered regional preparedness, participants were asked how well prepared for change they considered regions in the United States. Only 1% of respondents considered the U.S. very well prepared for three of the four identified global trend impacts.

*Getting to the preferred future will create organizational relevance for NADO's membership within the scope of regional development.*

### How well prepared are regions in the USA for change associated with the following trend areas? (n=156)



#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- Regional preparedness will require a collaborative approach to economic development.
- Local economies may be strengthened by working as a regional collaborative to prepare for current and future impacts of macro trends.

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### 4.3 NADO PREPAREDNESS AND POSITIONING

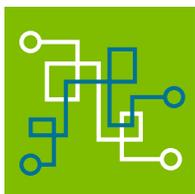
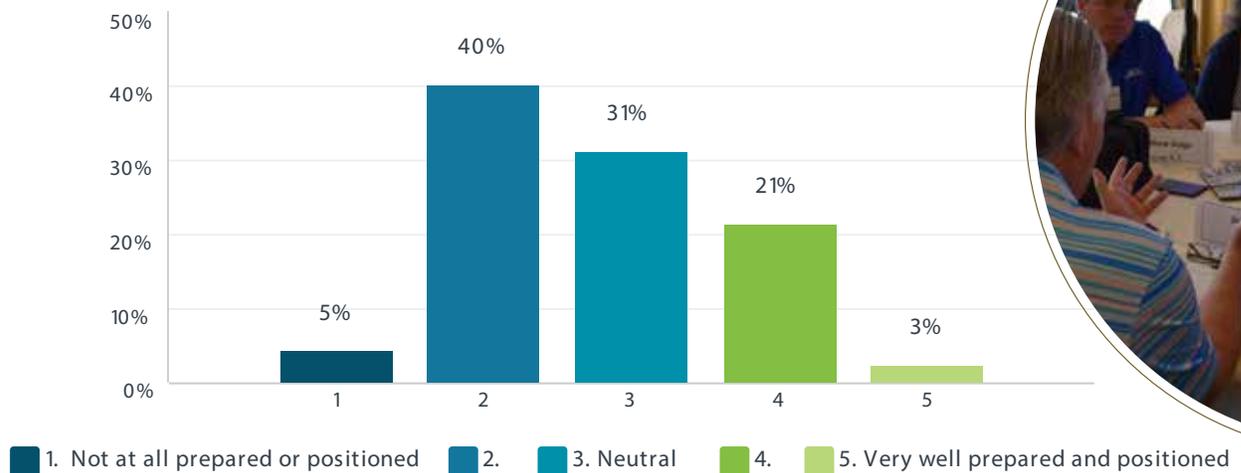
To understand perspectives on how well prepared NADO and its members are and how NADO could best assist its members to be prepared for the impact of emerging macro trends, 2018 Annual Training Conference participants were asked two questions with respect to responding to the identified trends. Although survey respondents generally did not consider NADO and its members very well prepared, they did identify several areas of opportunity where NADO could leverage its assets to guide and lead its members.

*In order for NADO to help its members to be prepared for emerging macro trends, it will need to continue to expand on its current body of work to be able to help members adapt to a rapidly changing environment.*

#### 4.3.1 NADO AND MEMBER PREPAREDNESS

NADO's 2020-2024 strategic action plan will serve as the roadmap for the organization over the next five years. The strategic action plan will be used to prepare and guide NADO and its members as they confront the emerging macro trends that will impact all regions in the United States. As a benchmark, 2018 Annual Training Conference participants were asked how well prepared and positioned they considered NADO and its members to respond to these trends and find new opportunities. Only 3% of respondents consider NADO and its members very well prepared.

**How well prepared and positioned do you think NADO and its members are to respond to these trends, and find new opportunities? (n=154)**



**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- NADO can build its relevancy to its member organizations by expanding on current and developing new areas of expertise to help its members prepare for and cope with new and emerging issues.
- NADO's research capabilities are a tremendous opportunity to expand member knowledge about issues that will better prepare them for the impact of emerging macro trends.

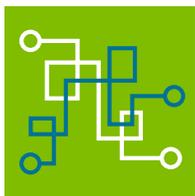
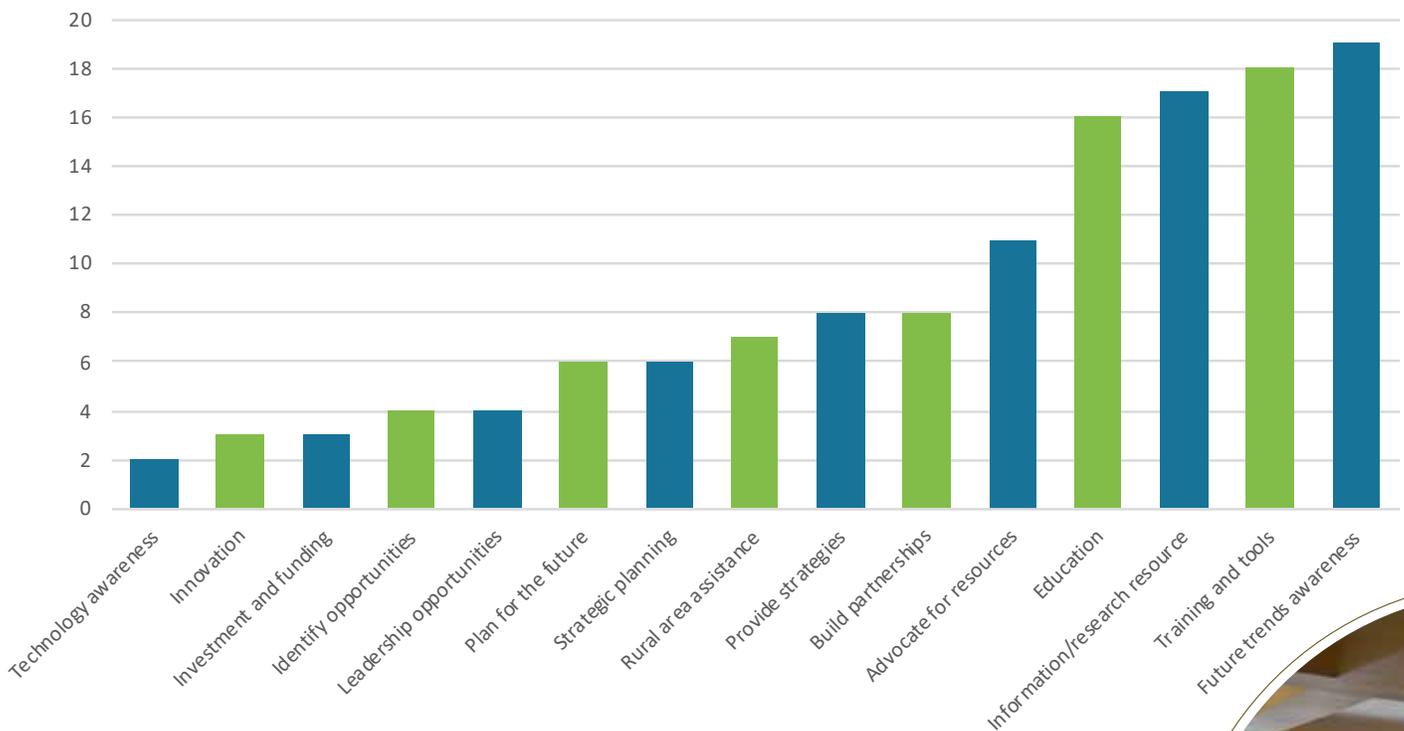
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### 4.3.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP

Leadership in the Knowledge Economy means keeping abreast of rapid change and charting a course for the future that ensures and retains economic viability and growth for communities and regions (Daniel Johnson, *Leading Economic Development: A Toolkit for Public Officials and Civic Leaders*, 2015). To determine how NADO could provide the best leadership for its members, 2018 Annual Training Conference participants and survey respondents were asked how they thought NADO can best prepare its members and regions for the future. Building trend awareness, training, research and information and education were seen as the top leadership opportunities for NADO.

*Organizational relevancy is a necessity for any nonprofit membership organization. Survey responses by plenary session participants provided significant guidance to NADO leadership on how to build its relevancy to membership.*

#### How do you think NADO can best prepare its members and regions for the future? (n=90)



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**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- The top four areas where NADO leadership can help its members and regions prepare for the future all involve the sharing and synthesis of current and relevant information and training.
- By forging new partnerships and alliances, NADO can diversify its services to members and play a leadership role in the advocacy for regional development.



## 4.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF FUTURE THINKING

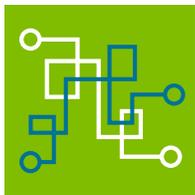
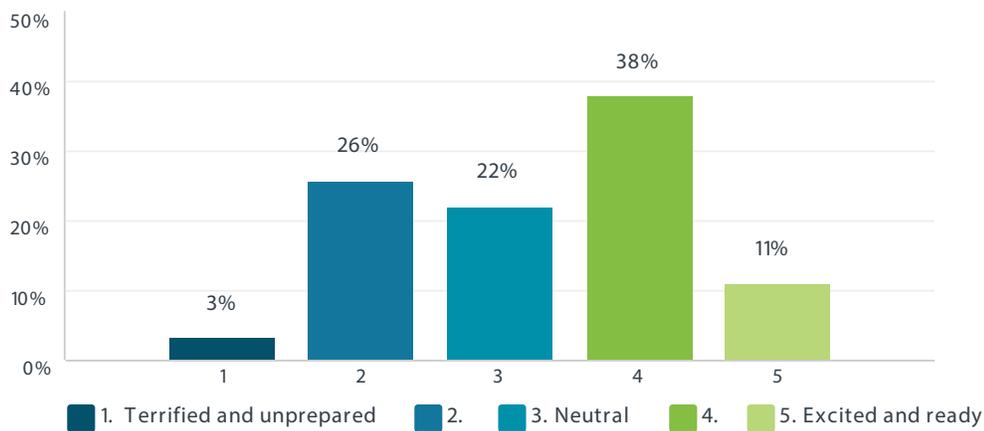
The key challenge to preparing for the future is knowing how to anticipate disruptive developments, such as the rapid adoption of automation. The next challenge is to more accurately predict what the future looks like and prepare for opportunities and consequences. Future thinking may be informed by projections and other methods of data analysis; however, the benefit of future thinking is how it alters perceptions of how certain decisions may play out. Bringing collective intelligence and a future thinking perspective helps inform better decision-making in a very real way.

*Future thinking prompts us to move out of our usual thought processes, and to consider new and alternative plausible trajectories for development.*

### 4.4.1 PARTICIPANT SENTIMENT ABOUT THE FUTURE

Considering the macro trends that are impacting regional areas in the United States, 2018 Annual Training Conference participants were asked how they felt personally about the future. Responses were neutral with only 3% stating they felt terrified and unprepared and only 11% feeling excited and ready.

**Thinking about the trend areas, how do you PERSONALLY feel about the future? (n=155)**



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**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- Strong capacity building support for members will require NADO leadership to adopt a future-thinking approach to planning and anticipating member service needs.
- The neutral response by conference participants points to a need for NADO to provide strong thought leadership around facilitating effective regional development.

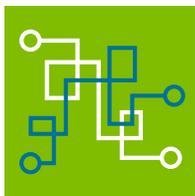
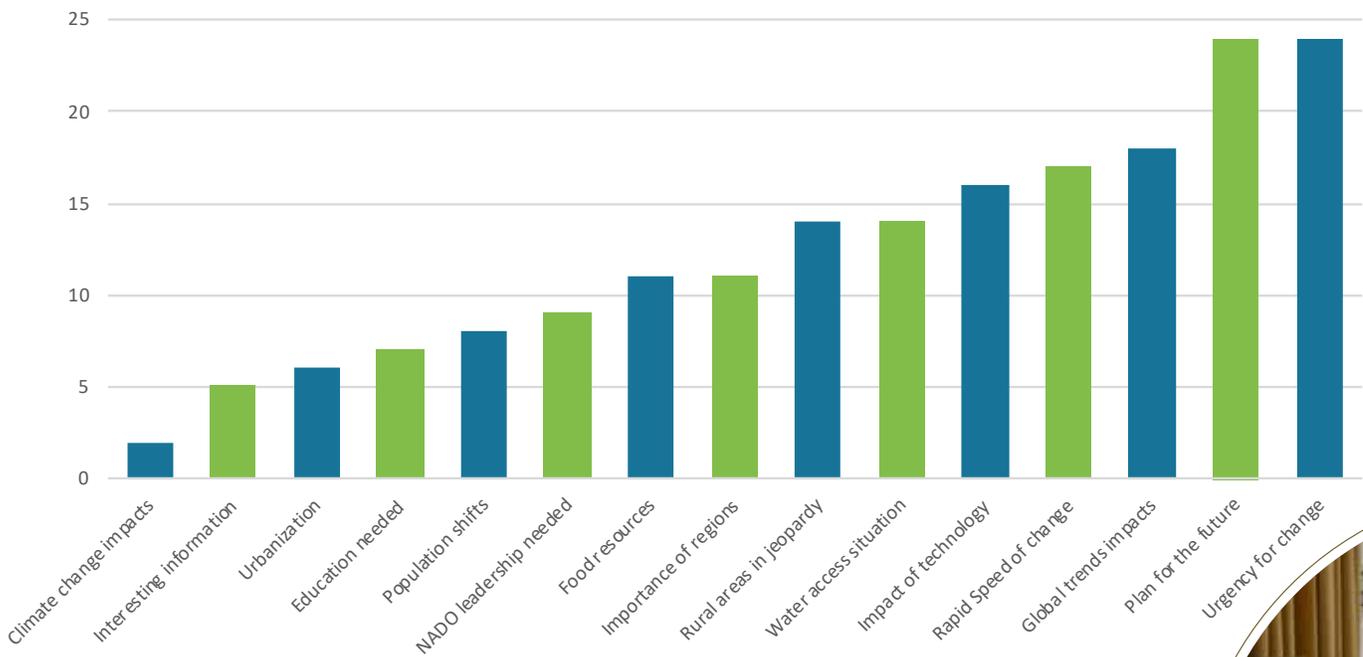


## 4.4.2 PLENARY TAKEAWAYS

NADO's 2018 Annual Training Conference took place October 13-16, 2018, in Charlotte, North Carolina. Future IQ presented the plenary session, *The Future of Regions: Implications for NADO*. The Session was an opportunity for NADO stakeholders to explore the identified macro trends and discover what they mean for regional development in the United States. Approximately 300 stakeholders attended the conference and were encouraged to take the 2018 Annual Training Conference survey following the session. Participants were asked what they considered their three top takeaways from the session. The need to plan for the future and the urgency for change were considered the two top equally important takeaways.

*2018 Annual Training Conference participants were provided the opportunity to take a holistic look at how the impacts of emerging trends would affect regional areas in the United States.*

**What are your top 3 takeaways from the Plenary Session? (n=88)**



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**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- 2018 Annual Training Conference participants indicated a sense of urgency for the need to plan for the future. NADO can leverage this sentiment to take bold strategic actions.
- The results of the 2018 Annual Training Conference survey gives NADO a significant mandate for change. Stakeholders are looking to NADO for strong leadership to help them prepare for the future.





## 5.0 STRATEGIC PILLARS FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Pillars were developed at the NADO Think Tank Summit in June 2018. The pillars represent the major theme or topic areas that create the foundation of the identified organizational preferred future and have been further developed into strategic action areas through additional engagement with membership and the NADO Board at the October 2018 Annual Training Conference. The Strategic Action Areas were discussed and approved at NADO’s March 2019 Board Meeting.

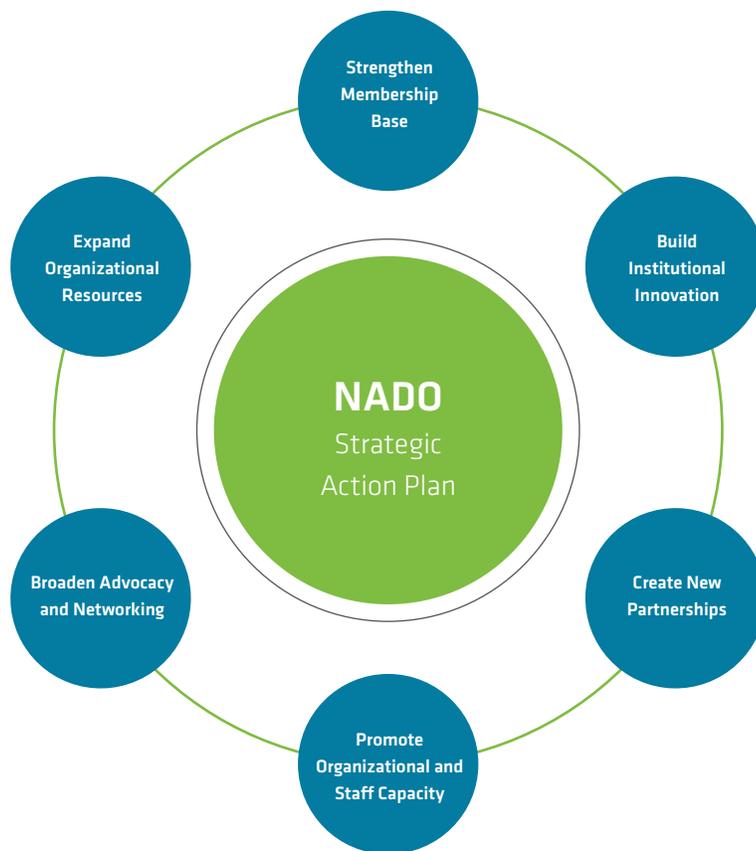
NADO’s Strategic Action Plan is structured around six key strategic pillars. These represent the priorities identified by NADO Board members and vetted throughout the engagement process.

The six key pillars are:

- Build institutional innovation
- Create new partnerships
- Promote organizational and staff capacity
- Broaden advocacy and networking
- Expand Organizational Resources
- Strengthen membership base

The Strategic Action Plan is not intended to solve all organizational challenges in the immediate short term. Rather, it presents a series of strategic actions that can be achieved in the short to medium term that will produce long-term results. They are intended to produce systemic and catalytic shifts that will drive the future economic growth, agility and vitality of NADO and attract new members and investments. The actions are designed to build the future pathway to the preferred future.

### NADO Strategic Pillars Framework



## 5.1 INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

### 5.1.1 IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

Increasingly, the viability of an organization rests in its agility and ability to innovate in an environment that is rapidly changing. NADO's survey results indicate that development organizations are not prepared for the impacts of macro trends, and membership is looking to NADO for leadership as they look to the future. This presents a tremendous opportunity for NADO to assume an expanded role in the field of economic development. Innovation is a key element in the success of the identified preferred future for the organization, 'NADO<sup>2</sup>'. Making this transformation by keeping the characteristics below in mind and pursuing innovative solutions are stepping stones on the pathway to NADO<sup>2</sup>.

In today's era of accelerated change, innovative organizations share the common trait of agility. Agile organizations share five characteristic practices:

- 1 Maintain a 'north star' orientation that is customer focused and committed to creating value
- 2 Work through a network of small, empowered teams
- 3 Use rapid decision and learning cycles to break work into small packages and constantly recalibrate based on tracked goals and metrics
- 4 Maintain a dynamic people model that ignites passion by putting people at the heart of culture and leadership
- 5 Use next-generation-enabling technology



*Pursuing institutional innovation for NADO will move the organization towards its preferred future and build its relevancy for member organizations.*

Source: Aaron De Smet, Michael Lurie, and Andrew St. George. Leading agile transformation: The new capabilities leaders need to build 21st-century organizations, McKinsey & Company, October 2018.



#### VALUE TO MEMBERSHIP:

- In order for NADO to maintain its relevancy, the organization will need to be proactive in its approach to providing innovative programming and services that anticipate needs for its membership.
- With urgency for change and planning for the future identified as the most significant takeaways from NADO's 2018 Annual Training Conference, NADO has been given a mandate to lead its members in new and innovative ways.



5.1.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS – GOALS FOR 2020-2024

• **Instill Innovation in the Organizational Culture** NB NS

Instill innovation in the organizational culture. Empower staff to be innovative. Innovation should not be focused in one job, and should be developed as culture in all employees.

• **Increase information about innovative practices and emerging trends** NS

NADO is in the unique position to influence the national dialogue on topics of importance to its members. Through conferences, publications, webinars, and social media, NADO and the NADO Research Foundation should share information with members to promote innovation through RDOs across the nation.

• **Convene innovator staff from like-minded organizations** NB NS M

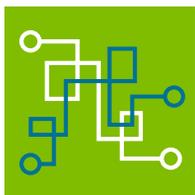
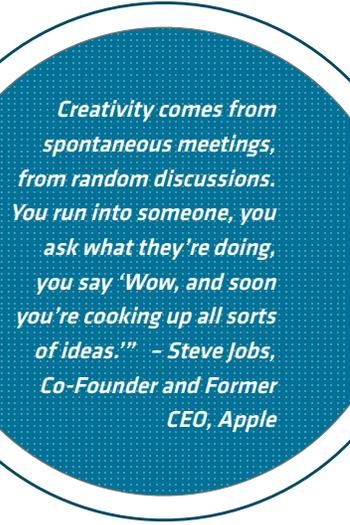
To explore understanding of how other national non-profit development organizations are incorporating innovation into their planning and service delivery, NADO Board Members have proposed convening innovator staff from like-minded organizations as an outreach element of the new Strategic Action Plan. The meetings would be held with the purpose of information-sharing and could potentially lead to collaborative efforts on innovative projects with new partners.

• **Recognize innovative practice through member awards program** NB NS RC AC

Each year, NADO recognizes member organizations that demonstrate innovative approaches to regional economic and community development through its nearly 30-year old Innovations Program. In 2019, NADO launched its new Impact Awards and members are able to seek recognition for projects and work they are doing that has measurable impact across their regions. The awards are recognized at NADO's Annual Training Conference in October, and awardees are encouraged to attend the conference to present their projects to other members. NADO uses the information gleaned from these awards every year to better advocate for members on the hill, educate agencies about the important role they do (and impact they have), and to enhance NADO's research products.

**Key:** NB **NADO Board Member (NB)**, NS **NADO Staff (NS)**, M **Membership (M)**

AC **Research Foundation Advisory Committee**, RC **RPO Council of Peers**



**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- It is evident from survey data that members are looking to NADO to broaden its ability to provide information and fresh ideas to deal with emerging macro trends and issues. NADO has the opportunity to position itself as an innovation thought leader for RDOs.
- Constantly changing technological advancements provide NADO with tremendous opportunities to develop innovative service deliveries for member services.

FutureInsight

## 5.2 CREATE NEW PARTNERSHIPS

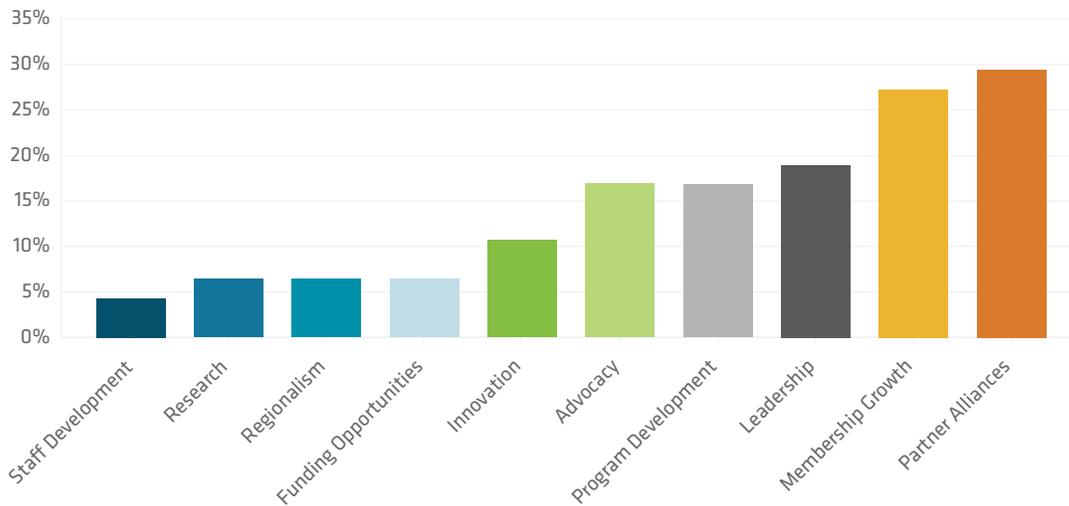
### 5.2.1 IMPORTANCE OF NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Building partner alliances was identified by NADO Board members as the most significant opportunity for NADO in the next five years. Pursuing this opportunity will be critical for NADO to maintain its relevancy, build organizational sustainability and open up growth opportunities in new sectors. Leading scholar Henry Etzkowitz describes the interaction between higher education, government and industry in the role of economic development as ‘the key to innovation and growth in a knowledge-based economy.’ Expanding NADO’s reach to create new cross-sector partnerships will provide the organization with added capacity to act on its mission to provide advocacy, education, research, and training for the nation’s RDOs.

*In an increasingly interconnected world, global partnerships and collaborations have become important elements in economic development strategies for local communities.*

#### Most Significant Opportunities for NADO – Response Categorization

What do you think are the most significant opportunities for NADO in the next 5 years? (n = 48)



#### VALUE TO MEMBERSHIP:

- New partner alliances will expand NADO’s capacity to grow new networks and access more knowledge and resources to better meet the needs of its members.
- New diversified partnerships will help NADO to stay relevant for members, especially in the area of changing consumer demand and the increased need for social responsibility in regional economic development strategies.

5.2.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS – GOALS FOR 2020-2024

• **Diversify funding streams through different partnerships** NS

In addition to collaborations with foundations, NADO has the ability to diversify funding streams by developing different types of partnerships. Working with universities and higher education, for example, has the potential to open funding resources for research of interest to both organizations. Increasingly, funders of university programs and research are requiring university partnerships with nonprofit organizations or local government to link academia to the practical needs of local communities. Additionally, funding opportunities aligned with regional funders, corporate funders, and other federal partner agencies could offer a more diversified funding streams for the organization.

*Creating new partnerships opens up new resources and collaboration opportunities for NADO and the NADO Research Foundation.*

• **Strengthen relationships with other national association leadership to expand or broaden partnerships** NB NS

In order to build NADO's national role and leadership among membership development organizations, NADO Board members have indicated a keen desire to build partnerships with other national association leadership. As a convener of such leadership meetings, NADO has the opportunity to build new partnerships with like-minded organizations.

• **Develop collaborations with foundations** NB NS

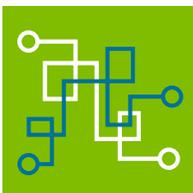
Developing new collaborations with foundations would allow NADO to expand its research capabilities as well as its services. NADO should track the issue areas of interest to foundations as an early indicator of the direction that public and policy makers may go.

• **Create tool to facilitate NADO and NADO member partnerships** NS M NB

NADO does not currently have a database of member partnerships. To better help NADO and its members develop partnerships to enhance their work, a comprehensive survey of NADO member services and programs must be conducted. Such a database would be an invaluable resource help to connect members with each other's resources and to know where gaps exist. This action item would involve the development of an inventory of NADO members' partnerships, programs, and services of NADO members that could be available to member organizations.

• **Expand partnerships on key topic areas through events, conferences and trainings** NB NS M AC RC

Partnering with key partners on key topic areas through events, conferences and training, will enable NADO to promote regionalism and build new connections and resources. Adding these resources to its menu of opportunities for member organizations will build NADO's role as a 'go to' organization for information and training.



**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- Strong, diversified partnerships with other national organizations will expand NADO's reach and reputation among RDOs.
- The demographic macro trend of mass urbanization and rural depletion will require development organizations to partner regionally to assist local communities with these challenges.

## 5.3 PROMOTE ORGANIZATIONAL AND STAFF CAPACITY

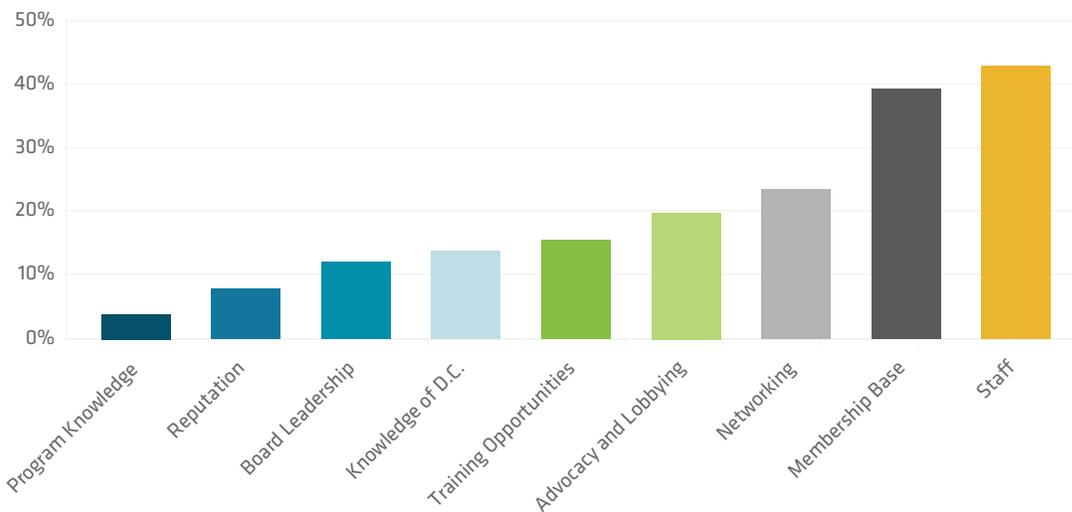
### 5.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONAL AND STAFF CAPACITY

NADO is at a point in time where it has tremendous opportunity to both reassess its strategic direction and to support this change by strengthening its internal organizational capacity. Current NADO staff are the cornerstones of NADO's reputation, and their value to the organization cannot be underestimated. The Strategic Action Plan will be the blueprint for staffing direction over the next five years and will recommend supportive funding and resources to support staffing changes necessary to support the strategic action steps outlined in the plan.

*NADO is fortunate to have highly capable, committed staff that is considered by Board members as NADO's greatest strength.*

#### NADO's Greatest Strengths – Categorized Responses

What do you think are NADO's greatest strengths? (n = 51)



#### VALUE TO MEMBERSHIP:

- Having the proper staff in place to carry out NADO's mission is a key component of serving the needs of member organizations. Staff are a vital link between the Board and its membership.
- NADO's personal, hands-on approach to member services provides a collaborative environment for RDO's and fosters confidence in the organization.



5.3.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS – GOALS FOR 2020-2024

• **Board approval of NADO Strategic Action Plan** NB

To implement the NADO's new Strategic Action Plan, NADO Board members must approve the plan. Discussion and final approval of the Strategic Action Plan is expected to take place at the 2019 Board meeting in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

• **Identification of staff skills sets and capacity gaps** NS

Identify NADO staff skill sets and determine capacity gaps. This will help establish a staffing plan to address service delivery to membership as identified in the Strategic Plan.

• **Update job descriptions of all NADO staff** NS

Understanding staffing needs of an organization requires updated job descriptions for all staff. Formal job descriptions for all NADO should be updated and provided to the Board of Directors following the adoption of the Strategic Action Plan.

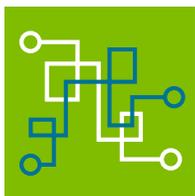
• **Ensure alignment of job descriptions, responsibilities, and compensation** NS

With the intention of setting new strategic direction for NADO and the NADO Research Foundation, Board members have recommended an internal assessment of organizational staffing needs. This assessment will identify existing strengths as well as gaps in the organization's operational capacities. The assessment will also assure that staff, current and new, are compensated in line with industry standards, educational level and experience. With current staff considered the greatest strength of NADO, care should be taken to build on existing personnel and their abilities.

• **Support ongoing professional development opportunities for staff** NB NS

To ensure that NADO recruits and retains high-performing employees, professional development opportunities should be made available to staff for training, education, and networking.

*With extremely capable staff identified as its greatest organizational strength, the issue of capacity as one of its weaknesses will require serious consideration of staff expansion.*



FutureInsight

**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- Emerging workforce trends include an increase in work-from-home arrangements and telecommuting. NADO has the option to factor in such arrangements as it decides on its office location and needs.
- With Advocacy considered by NADO Board members as NADO's most important function, the importance of supporting NADO's organizational capacity to educate law makers about emerging macro trends becomes critical.

## 5.4 BROADEN ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

### 5.4.1 IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

Advocacy is one of NADO's highest priorities. Considered foundational to NADO's functions, NADO will continue to advocate on behalf of its members to ensure that policies, programs, and funding that NADO member organizations currently rely on remain in place. As opportunities arise, NADO will also advocate for policy changes and regulatory reforms that would enhance NADO members' abilities to succeed. On an ongoing basis, NADO will educate members of Congress and their staff on the important work of RDOs, both within their Congressional districts and across the country.

*Building the relationships between member organizations and advocating for their needs is critical to the success of NADO.*

In tandem with NADO's advocacy work, NADO will also prioritize networking and relationship-building with other organizations and experts. NADO will continue to strengthen its connections with staff and experts who work for federal agencies, other associations and advocacy organizations, and on Capitol Hill. NADO's strong relationships in DC help enhance the success of NADO's advocacy efforts, and help provide opportunities for NADO members to benefit from federal partnerships.



NADO will use the priorities outlined within this strategic plan to identify policy issues of importance to NADO members, and to anticipate future opportunities for policy change. NADO will engage in advocacy accordingly to support the goals laid out in this plan.



#### VALUE TO MEMBERSHIP:

- Advocating for the interests of NADO's member organizations helps maintain and increase the visibility and strength of RDOs nationally. NADO's advocacy priorities are direct reflections of the priorities of NADO's membership.
- Ongoing networking efforts allow NADO to build strong coalitions of stakeholders and partners. NADO draws on the collective power of these coalitions in order to effect change.



5.4.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS – GOALS FOR 2020-2024

• **Anticipate and harness opportunities for policy change** NB NS M RC

NADO will prepare its members and regions for the future by anticipating opportunities for policy change, and by mobilizing quickly to harness those opportunities when they arise. NADO will educate elected officials and Hill staff to help them understand how specific policy changes may impact NADO members. NADO will advocate for policy changes that could have a positive impact for RDO's, while discouraging changes that could be detrimental. NADO will also continually research future trends and help promote awareness of how those trends may impact RDOs and their regions, in order to help policymakers make evidence-based decisions. NADO will continue to provide a strong voice for its members.

• **Expand networking with other agencies and potential partners** NB NS M AC RC

NADO will continue to expand its networking efforts and build and strengthen its connections with federal agencies and strategic partners. NADO will strengthen its existing relationships while also reaching out to new potential partners to brainstorm opportunities for collaboration.

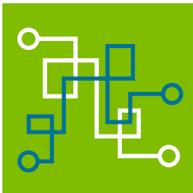
• **Promote NADO's national visibility beyond its core membership** NB NS AC

NADO will increase its visibility beyond its core membership in an effort to strengthen NADO's reputation and standing as a national advocacy organization. NADO will continue to build its brand as a leading expert in the regional community and economic development arena.

• **Improve marketing and branding and explore new methods of communication with members** NS

To ensure that NADO's advocacy priorities are directly driven by the needs of RDOs, NADO will encourage its network of member organizations to help define which policy issues are most important to them. NADO will expand and invest in avenues for communication that allow dialogue to occur back and forth on an ongoing basis between NADO and its member organizations.

*Advocacy and networking were identified by NADO Board members as two of the most important functions of NADO.*



FutureInsight

**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- As macro trends impact regions in new ways, NADO will help RDOs adapt to change by advocating for policies that address their regions' current and future needs.
- NADO will continue to prioritize networking and collaboration with strategic partners and coalitions that can assert collective strength when needed.

## 5.5 EXPAND ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

### 5.5.1 IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Consistent and sustainable resources are key to successful organizations. To continue to provide legislative and advocacy services to our membership, it is critical that the NADO legislative team have enough resources to ensure their efforts have a positive impact on members and RDO's in general. NADO member dues and conference registration fees are the primary source of revenue for these activities. These revenues also cover some membership and operational activities of staff.

To provide additional services and programs to members, NADO established the NADO Research Foundation in 1988 to provide education, research, and training to RDOs and their executive leadership, staff, and policy board members. Generally, these efforts are funded through various grants and contracts from federal agencies, private philanthropy and other organizations. The Research Foundation has 501(c) (3) status to facilitate securing grants.

While the Research Foundation has enabled the organization to expand organizational resources to include foundation grants, federal government grants, and fee-for-service contracts, NADO's dues have remained constant since the last increase in 2001. Maintaining our legislative agenda is critical to the organization's purpose and the present dues structure has potential to hinder our success.

- As a pillar of NADO's Strategic Action Plan, expanding organizational resources is seen as key to increasing stability for NADO financially. The process of expanding organizational resources, including increasing membership dues (and possibly modifying the dues structure), expanding Research Foundation funding, and developing other revenue streams would provide the following advantages identified by the Board:
- Enable staff to do work in areas the organization does not traditionally engage
- Develop opportunities for non-project specific items; focus towards innovation capacity building and increasing leadership pipeline
- Allow staff to connect traditional strengths (e.g. regions cross-walking rural and urban) to new growth areas
- Grow capacity for innovative work for NADO and members

Taking an expansionary approach to fund development for the organizations will require an alignment of NADO's membership dues structure, and grants/contracts, fee-for-service, and other revenue generating goals. This will require action by NADO's Executive Committee and Foundation Board to redefine focus areas and align them to appropriate revenue sources.

*Expanding organizational resources will support the implementation of NADO's Strategic Action Plan.*



5.5.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS – GOALS FOR 2020-2024

• **Promote/market NADO's strengths** NB NS M RC AC

Expanding organizational resources for NADO will require a proactive approach to fundraising and development. Promoting and marketing NADO's strengths when developing the 'ask' will be critical information to relay to potential new funders. Updated information on the organization in its identified strength areas of knowledge of federal government, advocacy, networking, training opportunities and program knowledge should be made readily available.



• **Identify funding resources to cultivate relationships** NB NS M

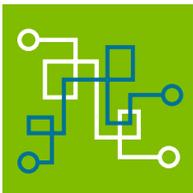
With funding identified in the 2018 Think Tank Summit survey as NADO's greatest weakness, this topic is a future-splitting question for the organization. NADO needs to expand its funding sources to include other federal agencies, private philanthropy, membership dues and Fee for Service contracts. Additionally, the NADO Research Foundation Board will need to carefully align foundation focus areas with identified new funders, and work diligently to cultivate relationships through phone calls and face-to-face meetings.

• **Promote NADO speakers at other organizations' conferences and events** NB NS M

As part of developing NADO's reputation on a national level, NADO can promote its organizational breadth and knowledge by maintaining a database of potential NADO speakers. It is recommended that NADO develop a 'Speakers Forum' database of NADO Board members, staff members, and membership willing to speak on specific issue areas in regional development.

• **Develop a plan for increasing organizational resources** NB NS

In order to increase organizational resources, NADO will be required to develop a clear 'ask' to federal agencies and foundations and determine an appropriate funding mix of private vs. federal vs. fee for services vs. contracts vs. member dues. This 'ask' must align NADO focus areas with potential funder priorities. This will require significant research and preparations by NADO staff and should be factored into organizational capacity needs.



**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

- The impact of emerging macro trends has opened up new funding sources to help communities adjust with effects such as climate change and rural population depletion. Development of such a funder database for NADO members is recommended.
- Given the rate of change occurring in all sectors, funders are constantly changing focus areas to support community needs. Staying on top of these changes will require vigilance on the part of NADO staff.

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## 5.6 STRENGTHEN MEMBERSHIP BASE

### 5.6.1 IMPORTANCE OF NADO'S MEMBERSHIP BASE

High quality membership services are the cornerstone of any nonprofit organization. The viability of a membership organization is dependent on establishing value and relevancy in services for its members. Current NADO member services offer an array of top-quality benefits to member organizations based on flat membership fee levels. NADO has done an exemplary job in providing a personalized approach to membership needs, and it is assumed that any changes to the fee structure would maintain NADO's high level of services.

NADO Board members identified member services as one of the top three most important items to be discussed when considering the future of NADO. NADO membership dues have not been raised in 18 years, and there is considerable board support to revisit the membership dues structure to expand growth potential and to make membership dues and options more equitable for members.

*High quality member services build on-going loyalty and commitment as well as a collaborative environment.*



#### VALUE TO MEMBERSHIP:

- The development of high-quality membership services for NADO will increase networking opportunities for members over time. Examples include programming that targets specific membership and builds collaboration around common interests or needs.
- Restructuring of NADO's dues structure will require careful and clear communications and messaging to member organizations about the benefits of the changes.



5.6.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS – GOALS FOR 2020-2024

• **Strengthen member outreach procedures** NS

In order for NADO to provide high-quality membership services, the organization needs to continue to develop new member outreach procedures using new technologies and approaches. As new technology systems consistently emerge, NADO will need to keep current on their systems communications with members and update regularly.

• **Form a members Emerging Professional Group** NB NS M RC AC

Recruiting and retaining members has become a challenging task for many organizations. To remain relevant to newer members, many organizations have formed Emerging Professional groups to train and offer networking opportunities to a newer cohort of membership.

• **Restructure NADO membership dues** NB

Membership organizations maintain different membership levels often to accommodate organizations with varying revenue streams or needs. To this point, Board members support restructuring NADO membership dues to align dues levels with services provided and current market values.

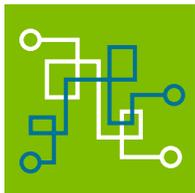
• **Create internal member portal to share resources** NS M

Expanding organizational resources for NADO also means expanding dollars for its members. Not all RDOs have extensive internal development or fundraising capabilities. To assist its members, NADO should create an internal member portal to share resources and facilitate peer-to-peer exchange.

• **Develop emerging leader training for regional development organizations** NB NS

Professional development is key for staff and organizational leaders to keep current on trends, regional development and industry information. NADO Training Conference attendees identified information/research resource, training and tools, and future trends awareness as areas where NADO can best prepare its members and regions for the future.

*Expanding NADO's membership base will require a delicate balance of regional and local needs. The Board will need to provide clear communication and education about the purpose behind its strategic action plan roll-out.*



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**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

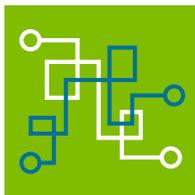
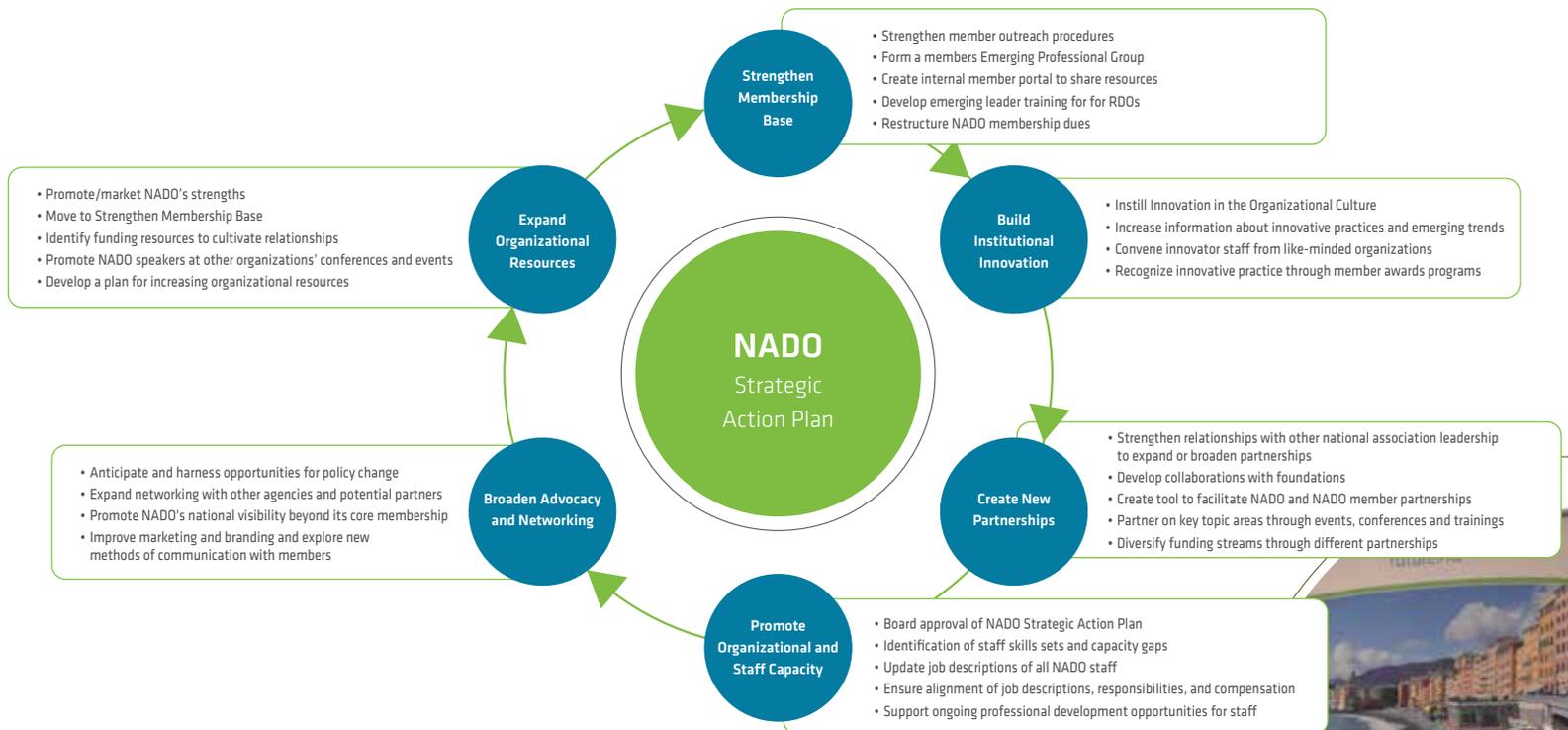
- Survey results indicate membership growth as the second most significant opportunity for NADO in the next 5 years by NADO Board members.
- As more communities and regions deal with emerging macro trends, NADO has a significant opportunity to become a 'go-to' knowledge resource on how to deal with these trends. This cutting-edge reputation will build NADO's membership base.



## 6.0 COMBINED STRATEGIC ACTION FRAMEWORK

The NADO Strategic Action Plan provides a framework for the organization to apply best practice to the key action areas of the plan. The framework creates a compelling collection of strategic actions, goals and objectives.

### NADO Strategic Action Framework



#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- NADO's strategic pillars provide areas for both significant institutional innovation and the deepening of already identified strengths in the areas of advocacy and networking.
- NADO Board members were in agreement that all of the Strategic Actions identified were realistic and achievable within the five-year timeframe of the Strategic Action Plan.

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*To be sustainable, NADO needs to increase revenue and staff, and become a more diversified and stronger organization. Efforts that support these actions will drive NADO towards the preferred future.*

## 7.0 OPPORTUNITY AND RISK ANALYSIS

Throughout the strategic planning process, stakeholders explored those actions that could potentially drive NADO towards or away from the preferred future identified in the scenario planning process. Although unforeseen events and opportunities may present themselves and cause readjustments along the way, the key to a successful strategic action plan will be avoiding the pitfalls of known steps that will take the organization off the path to its preferred future. Combining input from the various engagement activities, below are some markers that may be used as NADO follows its roadmap to the preferred future.

<b>What will drive us TOWARDS the preferred future?</b>	<b>What will drive us AWAY from the preferred future?</b>
Following through on NADO's new strategic action plan	Inaction; lack of engagement from leadership and members
Building a common understanding of organizational priorities	Poor communication by organizational leadership to membership
Increase consistent communications to members	Appearing to compete with other organizations
Building organizational capacity by hiring staff to support new services as needed	Ignoring the potential impacts of macro trends on regional economies
Provide expanded expertise to members	Lose or alienate members
Form a members Emerging Professionals Group to support a younger cohort	Allowing leadership retirements to deplete institutional knowledge
Promote NADO's strengths to attract new membership	Mission creep and loss of relevancy for membership
Identify new funders to cultivate relationships and increased revenue	Ignoring the impacts of the national political environment
Increase relevant technical assistance and education for member organizations	Destructive internal competition among member organizations or board members
Increase partnerships to build partner alliances	Incapacity of older leadership to transition to new leadership over time
Increase research capacity of NADO	Leadership pursuing self-interested agendas
Become more sustainable	Loss of funding and resources



## 8.0 ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE

NADO’s strategic planning process collected many great ideas for strategic action. These have been consolidated into the main Strategic Pillars and detailed by the Strategic Action Areas. During the process, stakeholders were asked about their perceived sense of urgency for implementation and priorities. Key points to note include:

- NADO stakeholders identified that the six strategic pillars were of similar priority.
- There was a preference for a methodical and planned approach.

The following roadmap lays out a high-level sequencing of action. The sequencing of action areas on the timeline are notational and should be developed further in the strategic planning process.

### Suggested roadmap and timeline 2020-2024





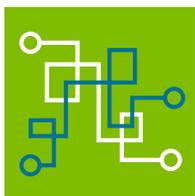
*To remain an agile and responsive organization, NADO should build the capacity and culture of change management. The ability to adapt and remain agile will be a defining characteristic of successful organizations.*

## 9.0 LOOKING AHEAD: KEY TOPICS FOR THE FUTURE

### CONSULTANT'S PERSPECTIVE

### 9.1 MANAGING THE SPEED OF CHANGE

One of the defining features of the coming decades will be the accelerating speed of change. The technological developments being ushered in by the new industrial revolution are predicted to be substantial and are driving the increasing speed of change. In particular, the advent of technology associated with smart cities and urban living are bringing vast new opportunities and challenges.



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**FUTURE INSIGHTS:**

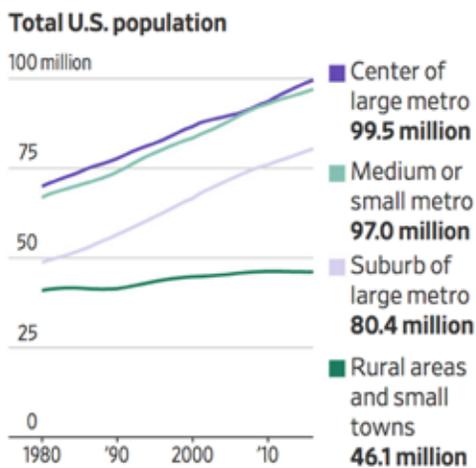
- The period between 2020 and 2040 will likely produce change at a faster rate than the previous 20 years. This speed of change may catch many public institutions and municipalities off guard unless they develop the capacity for faster and better organized responses.
- NADO should develop its own capacity for 'future intelligence', where the staff are tracking emerging trends. This will help ensure NADO can remain an early adopter of promising trends and educate its membership about them.

## 9.2 POPULATION SHIFTS AND THE IMPACT ON RURAL AREAS

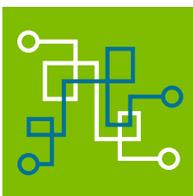
The growing trends of suburban growth and decreasing rural populations are occurring across the country. This growth is providing a tremendous opportunity for suburban cities to revitalize aging infrastructure and to create new environments that incorporate smart technologies and practices into their development trajectory. Rural communities are struggling to keep their populations steady as younger people flock to the city for job opportunities and amenities. Looking ahead, NADO has a significant role to play in helping rural communities adjust to their decreasing numbers.

*RDOs will play a growing role in helping rural communities adjust to growing population shifts and demographic changes, as well as shifts in industry size and automation levels.*

### Changing distribution of America society



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- The aging cohort of baby-boomers will hit a demographic cliff within the coming decades, and as younger people leave for cities and the suburbs, rural populations will face downward pressure.
- In the future, rural area will likely be less populated and primarily used for resource production, agriculture and recreation.

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## 10.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NADO Board members and stakeholders engaged in the strategic planning discussions with great enthusiasm. Their passion and interest ensured the discussions were thoughtful, and the outcomes reflective of the organization’s perspectives. This dedication is reflective of the deep commitment NADO leadership and stakeholders have to the future of their organization.

Future iQ would like to acknowledge the substantial support from NADO staff. Their outstanding support throughout the process was greatly appreciated.

*The dedication, professionalism and collaboration of NADO leadership, staff, and stakeholders are big assets to the organization.*

### **2018-2019 NADO Executive Committee and NADO Research Foundation Board of Directors**

Scott Koons, President

Chris Fetzer, Treasurer

Kevin Byrd, First Vice President

Chris Brown, Secretary

Misty Crosby, Second Vice President

Doug Elliott, Immediate Past President



## 2018-2020 NADO Board of Directors

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 Chad Eggen  
 Thomas Higginbotham  
 Randall Hrabec  
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 Laura Lewis Marchino  
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 Robert Clark  
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 Amy Kessler  
 Randall Rapp  
 Martha Shickle  
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### ***Midwest Region***

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 Matthew Dolge  
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 Mike Brown  
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 Dwayne Pratt  
 Melissa Rivers  
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 Christine Frei  
 Amanda Hoey  
 Robert Nash

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 Linda Salmonson  
 Jim Youngquist

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 Joe Brannan  
 John Bruner  
 Russell Cowley  
 Lynne Keller Forbes  
 Peter G. Gregory  
 Vernon R. Kelley  
 Jeff Kiely  
 Leanne Mazer  
 Tim Ware

### ***NADO Staff***

Mirielle Burgoyne  
 Carrie Kissel  
 Joe McKinney  
 Ian Schramm  
 Brett Schwartz  
 Laurie Thompson



# 11.0 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NADO) AND NADO RESEARCH FOUNDATION

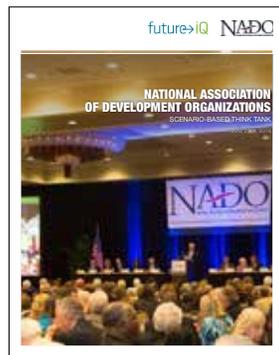
**For more information, please contact:**



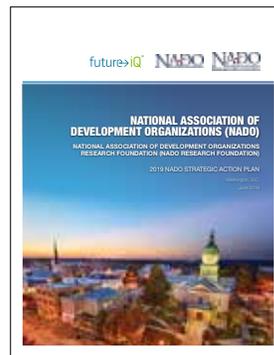
**Joe McKinney**, Executive Director  
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(202) 624-5947

**For more details, and to access relevant reports, please visit:**

<https://lab.future-iq.com/nado-strategic-visioning-and-planning-project/>



National Association of Development Organizations Scenario-Based Think Tank Report  
June 2018



National Association of Development Organizations Strategic Action Plan Report  
August 2019



## 12.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ specializes in innovative tools and approaches to assist municipalities, organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With nearly two decades of experience, the company has a global clientele spanning three continents. To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects, visit [www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or by email at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com)

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