PSIA AASI EASTERN REGION

Executive Summary

March 2026

Submitted by Kathy Brennan, CEO

CEO OBSERVATIONS:

Executive Summary

Key Points

- Membership remains stable, with retention improving to 88.1%, reflecting strong outreach and member engagement efforts.
- Financial performance remains strong, with year-to-date results ahead of budget and the organization expected to finish the fiscal year in a positive position.
- Operational programs and fundraising initiatives continue to strengthen member support, while targeted retention outreach and expanded scholarship funding are already producing measurable results.

The Eastern Region continues to operate from a position of organizational and financial strength. Membership retention has improved to 88.1%, supported by proactive outreach from the Member Services team, while overall membership remains slightly ahead of last year. Event participation has been somewhat lower than last season, reflecting intentional adjustments to our event schedule and operational factors we continue to monitor.

Financially, the organization remains healthy. Year-to-date results are ahead of budget, with strong event revenue and stable dues income. While expenses have increased due to inflationary pressures, wage adjustments, and the expansion of the Travel Pay program, we expect to finish the fiscal year in a positive position.

Operationally, the Eastern team continues to deliver high-quality educational programming and strong member support. Progress is also being made nationally on technology systems, assessment alignment, and strategic initiatives that will impact future programming.

Finally, the Education Foundation continues to grow its impact through expanded fundraising initiatives and increased scholarship support for members, helping strengthen the next generation of instructors and leaders in the Eastern Region.

Season Overview

As I move through my fifth winter as CEO, the season continues to bring the same excitement and energy that first drew me to this role. Due to family commitments, I have spent less time on the road with my Listening Tour; however, I was still able to visit several local resorts, connect with staff and members in some of our underserved disciplines—including cross country and adaptive—and participate in our premier events.

Membership

The Eastern Region stood out this season for having some of the best snow conditions in the country. I feel for our colleagues in other regions who struggled with running events, supporting instructors, and attracting members. In the East, we currently have an 88.10% retention rate, up significantly from 84.46% last year. This improvement is largely due to the outreach efforts of Karen Haringa and Regina Moerkoefer, who have worked closely with members in years 1–5 of membership and those at risk of losing their "Active" certification due to missing CEUs. These targeted outreach efforts were implemented after we saw retention dip last season, and the improvement this year suggests that the approach is having the intended effect.

Earlier in the fall, membership numbers looked particularly strong. At one point, we were more than 100 members ahead of last year. However, as the season progressed that margin narrowed, and we now find ourselves only 23 members ahead of last year. Our analysis indicates the change was primarily due to fewer new members. Unlike other regions, we cannot attribute this to poor snow conditions.

One possible cause is that many new members wait until late in the season to attempt their Level I assessment. With group sizes capped at six candidates per assessment to maintain quality and equity, our ability to expand capacity late in the season is limited. As a result, some instructors elect not to join. Over the course of the winter, we cancelled 39 Level I assessments or ran events with only a single group. We will continue working with Snowsports Directors to encourage candidates to prepare earlier in the season, to take advantage of these mid-season options next year.

Across the country the picture looks somewhat different. Nationally, membership is down by 867 members, with the Rocky Mountain Region alone down approximately 400 members. Intermountain is the only other region currently ahead of last season. *(see the table below and figure 5 for more details)*.

as of 3/8	National	Central	East	IM	NIM	NRM	NW	RM	West
24-25	34006	3681	9935	3457	398	1526	3770	7984	3537
25-26	33139	3601	9974	3587	332	1466	3586	7584	3314
Difference	-867	-80	39	130	-66	-60	-184	-400	-223

With slightly higher membership and the $2 dues increase for the 2025–26 season, dues revenue is 1.4% ahead of budget and last year.

We are also continuing to see gradual growth in the higher tiers of Member School participation, which increases engagement with school leadership through the Snowsports Management Seminar and on-site training days.

Events and Services

Despite steady membership numbers, we have seen fewer event attendees this season. This year we intentionally scheduled fewer events, with the goal of concentrating participation, reducing staff travel costs through shared lodging, and strengthening the sense of community that members consistently identify as one of the most valuable aspects of our programs.

In assessing the lower participation levels, several factors may contribute:

- The Level I capacity challenges described above.
- February participation appeared slightly lower than previous seasons, though we have not yet completed a detailed analysis of weather or other contributing factors.
- Economic conditions may also be impacting members’ ability to attend events.
- We continue to face challenges reaching members who have unsubscribed from email communications. This may mean some members are unaware of educational opportunities. While we have explored alternative approaches such as text messaging, current opt-in requirements and system limitations make implementation difficult, and we continue to work with the National Office to improve communication tools within these constraints.

Keri Reid continues to provide outstanding leadership as Director of Education and Programs. She remains deeply engaged across all disciplines, supporting staff development, member education, and national alignment initiatives.

Under her leadership the event schedule was completed earlier than in previous years, our premier events were highly successful, and staffing coordination has improved significantly.

The Eastern office team also continues to perform exceptionally well. James, Jodi, Karen, Keri, Melissa, Regina, and Thessaly manage an extraordinary range of responsibilities to support both members and staff. During the winter months the volume of member questions and concerns increases dramatically, yet the team consistently responds with patience, professionalism, and thoughtful solutions. We are also grateful for the seasonal support provided by Allie, Bill, and Lizzy in member services.

Notably this season, while we have received some critical member feedback, we have also heard very positive comments about the responsiveness and professionalism of Keri and Karen. Importantly, we have not seen issues escalate in the same way they did last season.

One interesting data point this year is the number of very low scores in our NPS results. While written feedback often reflects relatively minor concerns, some respondents are selecting the lowest possible score of "1," which has a disproportionate effect on the overall average. Webinar scores are also notably lower than other program offerings. This may be influenced by expectations surrounding my free "We Crush Winter" webinar series, which is designed primarily as an engagement and inspiration opportunity during the off-season.

Last year we heard some concerns about eliminating weekend in-house events. This season those concerns have largely diminished. Interestingly, our biggest challenges have occurred when staff independently coordinate availability with a resort, and we later need to assign them elsewhere. We will continue reinforcing messaging with staff to avoid creating these situations.

We remain confident that, as events continue to rotate geographically, staff and resorts will increasingly see the benefits of the current system, which:

1. Provides better access for all members.
2. Maximizes staff utilization by filling events.
3. Reduces cancellations by encouraging participation in public events.
4. Supports midweek events preferred by many resorts and often safer due to lower slope traffic.
5. Helps staff balance competing professional and personal commitments.

Financial Overview

Our Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) remains strong, and the Statement of Activities (Income Statement) is ahead of budget and only 8% behind last year. Event revenue is 10% above last year, largely due to modest price increases implemented to offset rising costs.

Expenses are higher than last year, reflecting inflationary pressures, wage adjustments, and the expansion of the Travel Pay program. Travel Pay alone has totaled $24,073 so far this season, compared to approximately $9,000 for all last year. Some administrative expenses are also running ahead of last year due to timing and operational factors. For example, board expenses reflect advance payment for the upcoming spring Board Meeting, computer expenses include increased credit card processing fees associated with higher event revenue as well as the additional AMS service contract charges, and some employee benefit and workers compensation costs reflect increases in insurance rates. These areas will continue to be monitored as the year progresses.

One administrative line item—employee benefits—appears higher than expected compared to prior year. We are reviewing the underlying entries with our accounting team to confirm that all employee benefit offsets are reflected consistently.

Some year-to-date variances reflect timing differences or improved expense categorization rather than changes in overall spending. For example, certain Member School and Training Pro expenses are now being tracked more specifically within program areas, and financial services expenses appear higher because the annual audit was completed and paid earlier this fiscal year.

When reviewing the Statement of Activities, it is important to note that January program expenses appear significantly below budgeted amounts. This reflects a timing difference: expenses related to Eastern Academy (ProJam) wages and operations were budgeted for January but were recorded in December this year.

While year-to-date results are strong, it is important to remember that our financial cycle is seasonal. Much of our event revenue occurs during the winter months, while several program expenses continue through the spring. As a result, we expect the current surplus to decrease as remaining events and staff costs are realized, though we anticipate finishing the fiscal year in a positive position.

This year also represents our second full cycle working with UHY as our audit firm following the transition from Bonadio, and the process has proceeded smoothly with our audited financials being completed in record time.

Overall, while several operational and market factors continue to require close attention, including event participation trends, technology systems, and national alignment initiatives, I remain confident that the Eastern Region is well positioned both operationally and financially as we move into the final months of the season.

National Update

National CEO Jeff Lifgren has now completed his first full year in the role. As expected during the first year of new leadership, the organization has experienced a period of adjustment as Jeff works to understand the environment and relationships across the association.

There have been some challenges on the education side where certain decisions have met resistance. At the same time, progress is being made on long-standing technology challenges, particularly improvements to the Association Management System (AMS) and related platforms. We are hopeful that meaningful progress will be made this summer in addressing the backlog of AMS issues and completing Phase 2 of the Unified Electronic Assessment Forms, which is intended to improve usability and mobile functionality.

Learning Management System (LMS) challenges—both regionally and nationally—are also being addressed. One possible outcome is that Eastern educational content may eventually migrate to the national LMS. While this would likely reduce the revenue we receive per course, it would also expose Eastern content to the full 30,000-member national audience, which could ultimately increase overall participation.

The ProHub scheduling system remains problematic. The Rocky Mountain Region experimented with Flaik this season, but even that system required supplemental tools such as ProHub and Google Sheets. Eastern will explore Flaik while also investigating whether we can take a more active role in improving ProHub, particularly since the National Office does not rely on the system in the same way the regions do.

In addition to systems work, Jeff continues to focus on stabilizing the national budget, identifying new revenue opportunities, and planning for Interski.

Other major national initiatives include:

- Continued progress toward national alignment of assessment processes. After reviewing Level I pricing and structures across regions, it was determined that full price alignment is not necessary at this time. Pricing differences are relatively small, and current models support regional operational needs.
- Quality Assurance and Evaluation (QAE) reviews began this season. Dave Gregory (Rocky Mountain) and Peter Allison (Penn State) observed our Level I process, and I was able to observe the Tech/MA day in Rocky Mountain. Data from these reviews will help support alignment goals for Alpine and Snowboard assessments by the 2026–27 season.
- Ongoing challenges remain in supporting associate members while ensuring professional members have access to education and assessment events needed to earn and maintain certification. One major obstacle continues to be the lack of system functionality to support members at different points in their development pathway, rather than treating all members as if they are in the same stage at a single point in time. This limits our ability to manage unique member pathways effectively and is something I bring up with Eric Jordan, Jeff Lifgren and the EXLC on a regular basis.
- A new firm has been engaged by the National Office to conduct national member and member school surveys. Data collection is nearly complete, and we hope to review the results at our June Board meeting. The findings may also help inform discussions about the long-term vision for PSIA-AASI during the upcoming Spring Conference.

Education Foundation

Several new initiatives were introduced this year to support fundraising efforts. The Eastern Academy (ProJam) Online Auction generated approximately $6,500, and a preview screening of the new Warren Miller film added another $3,690. We also partnered with Birdie Blue, which repurposes retired staff uniforms into unique bags and duffels, contributing an additional $1,167 to the Education Foundation. The Freddie Friday events raised $2,600 for the Women's Fund.

While these new initiatives were successful individually, overall proceeds from the traditional raffle, t-shirt sales, and auction were somewhat lower than last year. We suspect this may be partly due to donor fatigue from multiple fundraising activities during the same event, or possibly from reduced visibility of the raffle and merchandise sales. For next season we plan to experiment with improved placement—potentially positioning sales at the event entrance—to increase visibility and participation.

As you are aware, Dale Schaefer added an additional $25,000 to his endowment, expanding the scholarship program that was formalized last season. This allows for an additional annual $1,000 scholarship for Alpine Level II candidates from Kissing Bridge, Holimont, Buffalo Ski Club, and Holiday Valley.

Most recently, long-time Stratton instructor and member Matt Erickson passed away unexpectedly. The Stratton community has come together to establish a scholarship endowment supporting children's education for instructors from Stratton, Mohawk, and southern Vermont. Contributions and commitments have already exceeded $27,000.

With our strong financial position and increased fundraising, we were able to expand support for our members. This year we awarded $35,640 in scholarships, including Promising Snow Pro Level I assessments, Reinstatement Scholarships, and Member School Awards for Whaleback and Song.

We also supported Futures Camps for Alpine and Snowboard, helping develop the next generation of leaders, and held the Women's Performance Camp for the third season, led by Mermer Blakeslee and featuring National Team member Elle Matalavage.

Because national fundraising initiatives continue to evolve, the Eastern Region will continue strengthening our own foundation efforts. While guidance from a national fundraising strategy would be valuable—particularly around donor communications, prospect development, and systems for managing donor relationships—we are well positioned to continue building momentum regionally.

To support this work, I plan to reconstitute the Eastern Philanthropy Committee this spring and explore additional opportunities to grow our fundraising efforts, expand scholarship support, and strengthen long-term investment in the development of our members and future leaders.