



# 2025 Club Board Perspectives Report

Boardroom Insights: Capital, Dining, Governance and Membership Strategies Shaping the Future  
of Private Clubs

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## Boardroom Insights: Capital, Dining, Governance, and Membership Strategies Shaping the Future of Private Clubs

Board members in private clubs influence decisions that shape the member experience and establish the strategic direction for long-term success. From funding the next generation of facilities to managing food and beverage expectations, controlling access, and ensuring effective governance, today's boards face a complex and interconnected set of priorities.

The *2025 Club Board Perspectives Study*, conducted in partnership with the National Club Association (NCA), captures the insights of board members from private clubs across the United States and North America. The research highlights how boards are approaching four key areas: capital planning and funding, food and beverage philosophy and performance, governance best practices, and membership access strategies.

Results show that while board members share a clear vision for flexibility, strategic alignment, and long-term sustainability, gaps remain in planning integration, philosophy alignment, and data-driven decision-making. These perspectives offer a unique look at what boards consider most important today—and where they see the biggest opportunities to strengthen their clubs for the future.

The articles that follow explore each priority in detail, providing data-driven insights and practical strategies to help boards lead clearly, govern intentionally, and position their clubs for long-term success.



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## 2025 Club Board Perspectives

# Capital Confidence: How Clubs Can Plan, Fund and Grow Strategically

Capital planning is how clubs write the next chapter in their story—preserving their legacy while preparing for what's ahead. This article examines how club leaders are handling long-term planning, funding strategies, and member engagement to maintain their clubs' relevance, resilience, and preparedness for the future.

By Evan Van Eerd, CPA, Michael Gregory and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

### Key Insights

- Most clubs fail to integrate the strategic plan, reserve study, and facilities master plan, which limits their ability to make proactive, long-term capital decisions.
- Entrance fees and capital dues remain popular ways to fund capital, while most board members exhibit an unwillingness to consider debt within their capital funding plans.
- Clubs miss important chances to prepare for future capital needs because member engagement is used inconsistently.

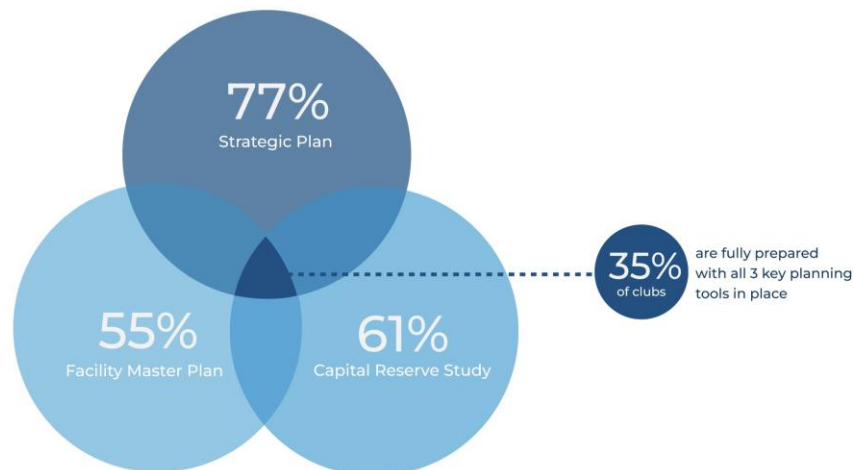
Every great club has a story that is shaped by its traditions, its people, and the unique experiences they provide. Capital planning is how you write the next chapter in that story. It's a dynamic, evolving process that ensures your club can adapt, thrive, and remain a special place for generations to come. Done well, it's more than a roadmap — it's a promise to your members, both present and future.

Our most recent research, the 2025 Club Board Perspectives Study, which surveyed board members from private clubs across North America and was conducted in partnership with the National Club Association, examines how clubs are planning for their unique futures.

### Leveraging Planning Documents

Results from our study show that many clubs have pieces of the future-planning puzzle in place, but few have connected all of them. As Figure 1 illustrates, a majority (77%) have a strategic plan, and many (61%) have conducted a capital reserve study. Just over half (55%) have a facility master plan, with 64% reporting that this is completed by qualified advisors external to the club. However, only about 35% of clubs have all three in place and up to date – a best practice for making informed and connected long-term decisions. Resources unsurprisingly play a role, with larger clubs (with revenues exceeding \$15M) more likely to have these documents in place – 80% have a strategic plan, 71% have a capital reserve study, and 62% have a facility master plan. Meanwhile, smaller clubs (under \$5M) are less likely to have a capital reserve study (44%) or a facility master plan (46%), indicating a gap that can impact long-term planning.

**Figure 1: Current Use of Planning Documents**



Note: The total percentage does not equal 100% as respondents were asked to select all documents their club currently uses.

Each of these documents is important as they serve a distinct but vital role in supporting the future of a club:

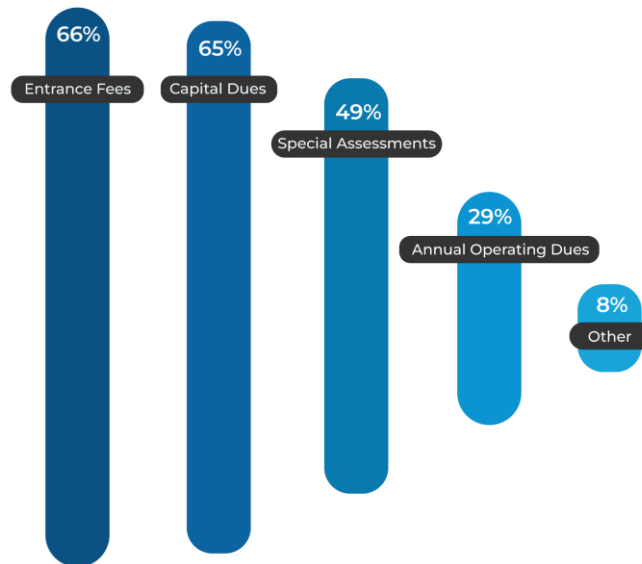
- **Strategic Plan:** Connects the club to its present reality and defines the club's vision by capturing how members use facilities, what they value, and their aspirations for the future.
- **Capital Reserve Study:** Provides a thorough understanding of existing assets and guides ongoing maintenance, ensuring the long-term health and performance of the club's facilities.
- **Facility Master Plan:** Builds a sequenced roadmap for physical improvements, aligning facilities with the strategic vision.

Taken together, these three documents allow a club to build an informed capital funding model, shifting from a reactive approach to a proactive one, making decisions, prioritizing resources, and aligning capital investments with both operational needs and member expectations.

## Funding Capital Planning

Entrance fees and capital dues continue to be the main methods clubs use to fund long-term investments, with 66% relying on entrance fees and 65% on capital dues. These sources, along with other methods shown in Figure 2, form the core of most clubs' capital funding strategies.

**Figure 2. Capital Funding Methods**



Note: Respondents were asked to select which of the available options their club uses for funding capital improvements. Results were then compared to the self-reported revenue of the club.

When considering the impact of club size on funding source, a distinct change becomes apparent. At smaller clubs (under \$5M in annual revenue), 36% use dues for capital needs, compared to 23% at mid-sized and 28% at larger clubs, indicating smaller clubs may need to rely more on operational revenues. Special assessments are used by approximately 50% of clubs, with usage varying by club size: 37% at small clubs, 54% at mid-sized clubs, and 48% at large clubs.

Taken together, these patterns underscore an important takeaway for clubs: aligning the right mix of funding sources with their size, member profile, and long-term priorities is crucial to ensuring a stable and sustainable approach to capital planning. While the data supports what we already know about the challenges and pressures faced by smaller clubs, it underscores the need for robust planning and effective governance to meet current and future member expectations.

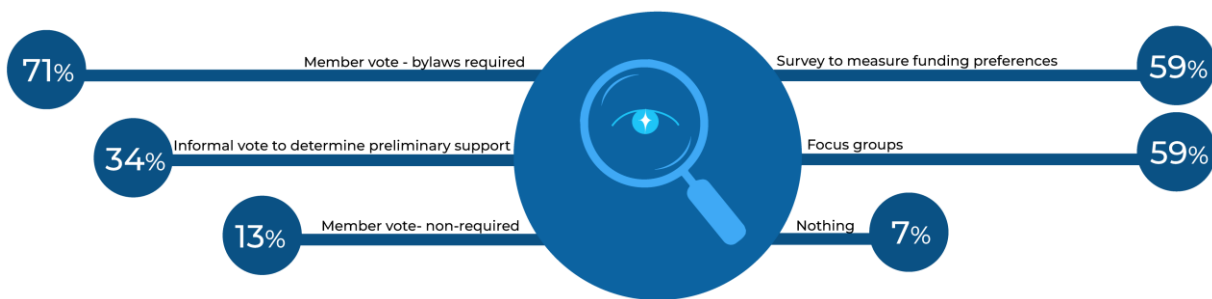
### Strategic Considerations

The use of debt or financing remains a concern for board members, with only 40% indicating a willingness to fund capital projects through debt. With proper planning, debt can be a powerful tool to help manage the costs of major capital projects, potentially reducing the need for special assessments. Having a comprehensive capital plan, including thoughtful estimates of maintenance and growth capital, is important to understanding your club's debt servicing capabilities.

## Capital Planning Practices

To understand how clubs manage capital, it was important to examine both the financial planning mechanisms and the processes used to secure member approval. At many clubs, formal member approval via vote is the primary option in collecting insights and support, as identified in Figure 3, with 71% of respondents citing this requirement for advancing capital projects. Beyond formal approval, clubs rely on focus groups and member surveys to understand preferences. Large clubs more often use focus groups (71%) to understand members' wants, compared to smaller clubs (53%), giving larger clubs an advantage in understanding members.

**Figure 3. Collecting Member Insight and Support**



Note: The total percentage does not equal 100% because respondents were asked to select all methods their club currently uses to gain member insight and support.

Beyond gathering members' insights, results reveal that clubs have an opportunity to better prepare and plan for capital project funding. Nearly 60% of clubs either have no capital reserve or share funding with ongoing capital maintenance (39%). This often results in funding decisions driven by scarcity rather than strategy, forcing clubs into deferred maintenance or reactive capital calls, both of which harm member satisfaction and market competitiveness. Only 36% of respondents indicated they have a dedicated source for funding capital projects through both ongoing capital and entrance fees.

## Club Leaders Opportunity

Clubs are continually striving to develop a capital plan that ensures assets are properly maintained and amenities continue to meet the evolving expectations of their members. In theory, this should be straightforward if clubs adopt sound accounting practices and consistent funding strategies. Instead, years of economic challenges, overlooked non-cash expenses, and the influence of shifting board agendas have left many clubs facing deferred maintenance and insufficient capital reserves.

The good news is that clubs can get back on track with a more deliberate and forward-thinking approach. Here's what leaders can prioritize next:

1. **Conduct a Professional Reserve Study:** Clubs need a clear understanding of the annual costs to maintain existing assets by completing a formal reserve study led by qualified engineers who assess the condition and expected lifespan of all capital assets. Unlike informal estimates or

supplier-provided life expectancies, an engineering-based study provides a credible and unbiased foundation for capital planning.

2. **Measure and Analyze Asset Utilization:** Clubs can regularly assess how assets are being utilized to identify areas for potential adjustment, whether through resizing, repurposing, or enhancing specific amenities to reflect actual demand.
3. **Compare Capital Needs with Funding Sources:** Once maintenance costs are known, clubs can compare those needs with expected capital inflows—such as entrance fees, capital dues, and donations—net of existing debt service costs. Any projected shortfalls can be proactively planned for through alternative funding mechanisms, new membership strategies, increased member costs or other operational efficiencies.
4. **Develop a Facilities Master Plan:** By leveraging insights from the utilization study, the club's strategic plan, and member input—supported by external expertise—leadership can guide the creation of a comprehensive facilities master plan that meets current needs and aligns with the club's long-term vision.
5. **Empower Management with Capital Planning Authority:** Allow management to proactively plan and allocate routine maintenance capital, aligning with the capital reserve study and utilization of amenities. This avoids reactive decision-making and improves overall operational efficiency.

Ultimately, disciplined capital planning and reliable funding strategies are not just financial best practices—they are core to protecting the club's brand, ensuring long-term sustainability, and delivering a member experience that evolves with changing expectations. Clubs that approach capital proactively, transparently, and with expert input will be best positioned to thrive for generations to come.

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Visit [www.ggapartners.com/insights](http://www.ggapartners.com/insights) to discover more about how boards are balancing competing priorities, explore insights from the Club Board Perspectives research, and learn how GGA Partners can support your club's long-term success.









## 2025 Club Board Perspectives

### Food and Beverage in Private Clubs: How Boardrooms Balance Satisfaction, Purpose and Profit

Private club boards are reevaluating their food and beverage (F&B) strategies to address rising costs and evolving member expectations. Results reveal key differences in philosophy and preferences, highlighting opportunities to transition from assumptions to alignment through data-driven strategy.

By Matthew Clarfield, Michael Gregory and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

#### Key Insights

- Boards report higher satisfaction with F&B than members typically do, suggesting a perception gap.
- Fewer than one in three clubs report breaking even on F&B, indicating that achieving surplus is challenging, even when it is the stated goal.
- The most widely supported strategies for improving efficiency include greater use of technology, reducing operating hours, and offering grab-and-go options.

#### ***What happens when club leaders and members perceive the same meal differently?***

In the *2025 Club Board Perspectives* survey, a collaboration between GGA Partners and the National Club Association that surveyed board members across North America, F&B satisfaction was rated 4.0/5, notably higher than the ratings typically reported by members<sup>1</sup>. This discrepancy reveals

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<sup>1</sup> Our internal GGA Database shows that over the past five years, members indicate an overall satisfaction of 3.6 out of 5 with F&B offerings at their clubs.

more than a difference in taste; it exposes a gap in perception that can shape budget decisions, staffing models, and investments in ways that may not align with member priorities.

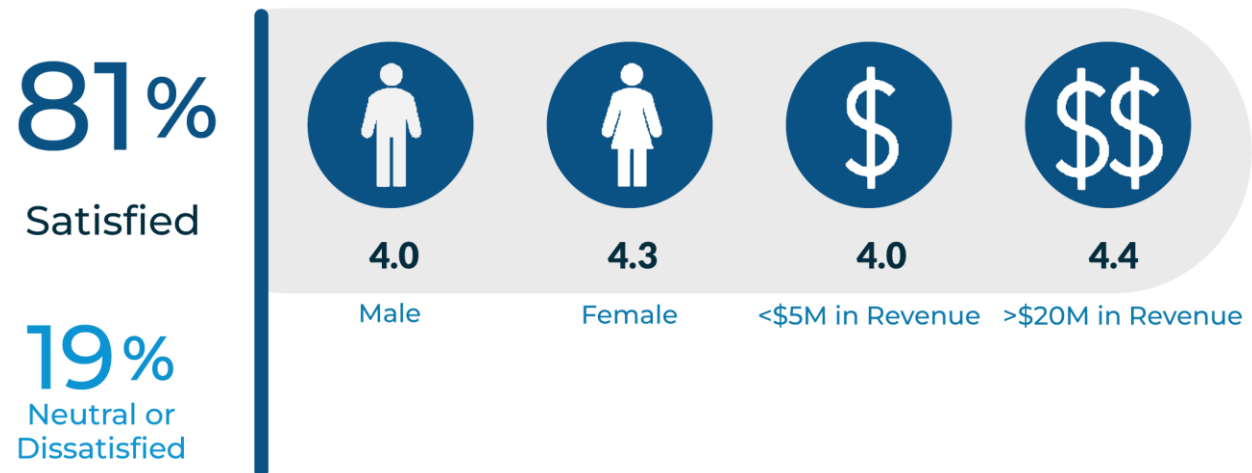
Compounding the challenge is a lack of consensus on the role of F&B – should it generate surplus or serve as a subsidized amenity? While the results reveal a mix of preferences, nearly one in four respondents disagreed with their club’s chosen philosophy.

## Food and Beverage Satisfaction and Vision

Board members express strong confidence in their club’s F&B offerings, with 81% indicating satisfaction. But importantly, do all board members maintain the same level of satisfaction?

The results, as shown in Figure 1, reveal meaningful differences. For instance, female respondents demonstrate a higher level of satisfaction than male respondents (4.3 vs. 4.0, respectively). While there is an overall trend that younger respondents are less satisfied than older respondents, there is a clear difference between the satisfaction at the largest clubs, those with revenue greater than \$20M, and the smallest clubs, those with revenue less than \$5M (4.4 vs. 4.0).

Figure 1. Board Members’ Satisfaction with F&B



Note: Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with F&B at their club, with ‘1’ indicating ‘very dissatisfied’ and ‘5’ indicating ‘very satisfied’.

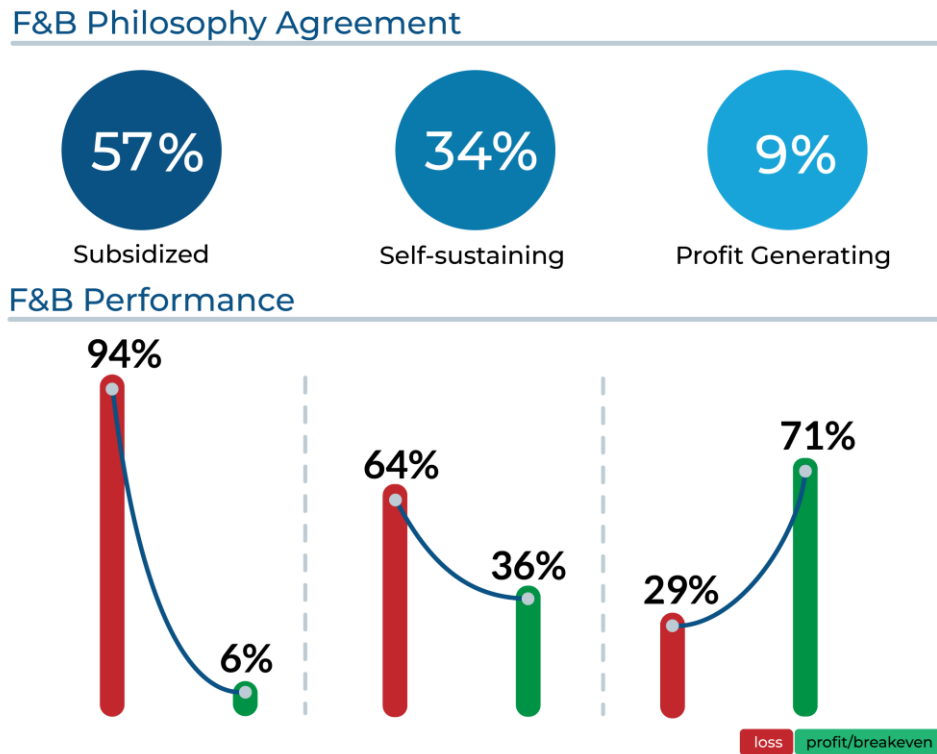
While results show general board satisfaction, the mix of board optimism and different member perceptions can reveal strategic blind spots. Confirming board perceptions with real-time member feedback is essential to ensure decisions rely on data rather than assumptions.

## Strategy Versus Performance

While 57% of board members believe food and beverage should be subsidized as an amenity, and 34% support a self-sustaining model, only a small percentage (9%) prioritize surplus. However, when comparing these stated philosophies with financial results, a clear disconnect appears: Of the 34% that support a self-sustaining model, nearly two-thirds report operating losses in their

F&B programs, including 17% that lose more than 15%. Meanwhile, among the profit-focused group, while 55% report some profit and 16% break even, nearly 30% report operating losses.

**Figure 2. Alignment of F&B Philosophy with Financial Outcomes**



Note: Respondents were asked to identify their club's F&B operational philosophy and then identify the profit/loss of their operation.

Initial findings from the study indicate that overall board member satisfaction does not differ substantially between clubs that do or do not subsidize F&B, except for a notable decline in overall satisfaction for clubs generating profits exceeding 15% (3.5/5 compared to an average of 4). This suggests that financial performance and experience quality are not inherently related.

*Our deeper dive into the data shows that governance can impact F&B perspectives – respondents from clubs with openly contested elections consistently had lower satisfaction with their F&B experience.*

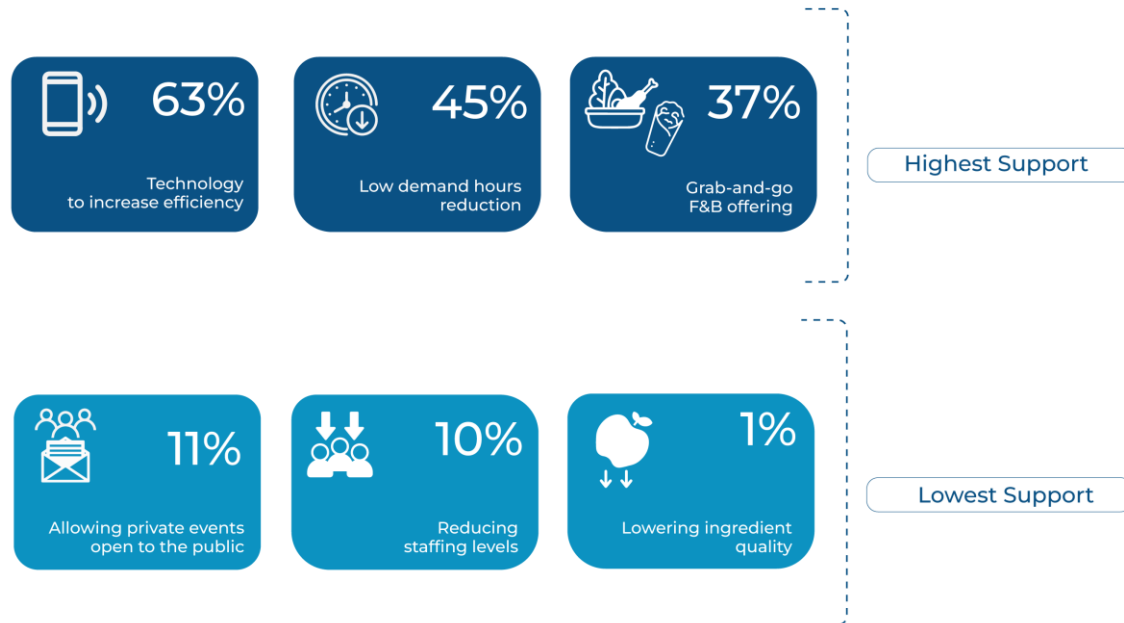
### Strategic Operational Opportunities

As clubs grapple with rising food and beverage costs and changing member expectations, boards are exploring a range of strategies to support financial sustainability. The results in Figure 3 indicate



respondents identified the increased use of technology as the number one opportunity, followed by reducing hours of operation and offering grab-and-go options to improve operational efficiency.

**Figure 3. Support for Increasing Performance and Efficiency**



Note: Respondents were asked to select which of the above options they would support to help improve the financial performance and operational efficiency of their club's F&B operations. The sum of percentages does not equal 100%, as respondents could select multiple options.

Further analysis reveals a nuanced landscape shaped by demographics. Younger board members (under 50 years) show greater support for grab-and-go offerings (60%) compared to the overall average (37%). At the same time, those over 70 favor strategies such as allowing public access for private events (18% vs. 12%).

Club size further influences strategy preferences. Respondents from the smallest clubs (those with annual revenue under \$5 million) expressed lower interest in increased technology usage and grab-and-go options (47% vs. 63% and 30% vs. 38%, respectively). In contrast, medium-sized clubs (\$10 million to \$15 million) showed significantly higher support for increased technology, reduced hours, and grab-and-go offerings compared to their peers (72% vs. 63%, 51% vs. 44%, and 45% vs. 38%, respectively).

### Club Leaders Opportunity

Club boards can approach F&B strategies intentionally, recognizing that the preferences of board members may not accurately reflect those of the broader membership. Success relies on striking a balance between financial goals and an understanding of member values, expectations, and the club's culture. To move forward with clarity and confidence, clubs can:

1. **Re-Examine F&B Satisfaction of Members:** Gather and analyze data-driven feedback from members to evaluate the actual level of satisfaction with the F&B experience. Avoid relying solely on board impressions, as they may not accurately represent the perspectives or changing preferences of the wider membership.
2. **Align Philosophy with Operational Reality:** Ensure the club's F&B philosophy – whether it is amenity-focused, breakeven, or surplus-generating – aligns with its financial performance and operational capabilities to help set expectations with what is achievable.
3. **Leverage Segmentation and Member Research:** Use demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal segmentation to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse needs of your members. Leverage these insights to guide menu planning, service planning, and F&B investment decisions.
4. **Integrate F&B into the Club's Broader Strategy:** Treat F&B not as a standalone cost center or member experience, but as a strategic offering that supports retention, engagement, and member value creation to support long-term club success.

To lead effectively in a time of evolving expectations and economic pressure, clubs can establish a disciplined process for revisiting core F&B assumptions. Boards can use current data to validate beliefs and ensure decisions remain aligned with member needs, operational realities, and the club's long-term strategic vision.

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## 2025 Club Board Perspectives

# Where Effective Governance Begins: Strengthening the Club Nominating Process

Decisions made about the Nominating Committee may be among the most important governance decisions your board makes. Our latest research reveals how structure, independence, and strategy can shape everything from board alignment to long-term club performance.

By Neil Brown, CPA, CIA, CRMA, IDC.D, Michael Gregory and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

### Key Insights

- Clubs have overwhelmingly adopted the best practice of having a Nominating Committee, although significant differences exist in perceived success, structure, and length of service.
- The formation of Nominating Committees varies across clubs, reflecting a range of practices, from board appointments to member-driven or hybrid selection processes.
- Clubs that adopt both skill-based nominations and non-contested elections report a substantial increase in effectiveness ratings for their Nominating Committees.

What if the most important decision your club makes each year isn't about the budget but about who serves on the board? Increasingly, club leaders recognize that effective governance isn't left to chance—it requires intentional design and planning. At the core of this process is a well-structured and independent Nominating Committee, where clubs move beyond tradition toward intentional, skills-based board recruitment, reflecting a growing consensus on the changes needed to stay competitive, member-focused, and strategically sound.

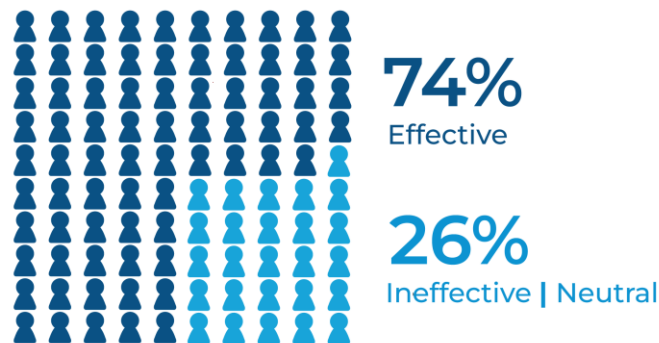


Our 2025 *Club Board Perspectives* research, which surveyed board members from private clubs across North America and was conducted in partnership with the National Club Association, offers a comprehensive review of the nominating process, committee structure, and overall governance effectiveness. The research highlights how clubs are aligning themselves with best practices and identifies areas where opportunities for improvement exist.

## Nominating Committee Effectiveness and Structure

The most effective clubs recognize the Nominating Committee as a cornerstone of strong governance. Survey results confirm this practice, with 94% of clubs reporting a Nominating Committee in place, signaling the broad adoption of this best practice. Overall, clubs rated the effectiveness of their Nominating Committees at 3.9/5, with nearly three-quarters (74%) describing them as effective or very effective.

**Figure 1. Nominating Committee Effectiveness**



Note: Respondents who indicated their club had a Nominating Committee were asked to rate the committee's overall success, with '1' indicating 'not at all successful' and '5' indicating 'extremely successful'.

Analyzing the effectiveness data shows minimal differences in club size, gender, and respondent age. However, notable variations in committee term structures were observed based on revenue levels, as shown in Figure 2. Clubs with lower revenue tend to prefer shorter terms, while larger clubs are more likely to have longer, multi-year terms. Overall, 42% of clubs reported using a 3-year term, and 38% reported a 1-year term, with higher-revenue clubs preferring longer terms. This suggests that governance continuity planning is linked to the organization's size.

**Figure 2. Nominating Committee Length of Term**

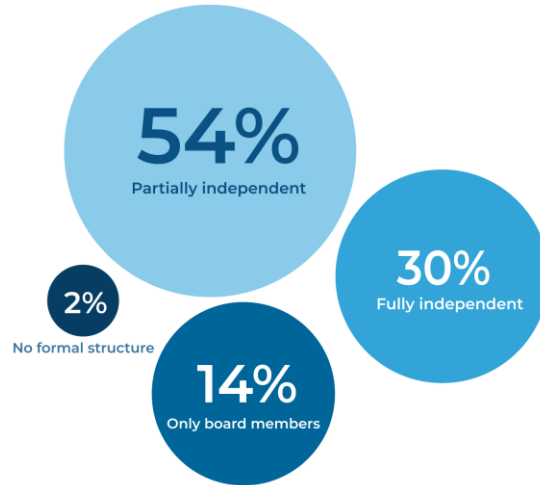
Committee Term	Total Revenue					
	Total	<\$5M	\$5M - \$10M	\$10M - \$15M	\$15M - \$20M	>\$20M
1 Year	38%	45%	44%	32%	29%	22%
3 Years	42%	38%	34%	53%	43%	48%

Note: Respondents who indicated the Nominating Committee was a standing committee of the Board were asked to indicate the length of the committee's term, ranging from 1 year to more than 3 years. Data from those who selected 2 years was removed from the data, given the limited number of responses.

### Composition of the Nominating Committee

The composition of the Nominating Committee plays a significant role in its overall effectiveness. Respondents reported varying degrees of independence, with many clubs recognizing the risks associated with having a committee composed entirely of current board members, as only 14% reported this structure (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Nominating Committee Composition**



Note: Respondents were asked to identify which of the above options best describes the committee composition.

More importantly, results indicate that 84% of clubs were at least partially, if not fully, independent from board participation. This suggests that many clubs are well-positioned to prioritize skill-based recruitment, which contributes to high-performing boards.

With half of the respondents (55%) indicating committee participation was determined through an appointment from the board, the remaining participants varied in their approach to committee participation. For instance, only 8% were elected by members, current committee members selected 12%, and the remaining 25% used a mixed approach, including:

- Bylaws or constitutional mandate (e.g., the last five past presidents)
- Presidential appointment or selection
- Past president or chair-led selection (e.g., committee lead of individually selected)
- Board involvement (e.g., selection approved by the board or recommendations provided)
- Volunteer call and application process, with random draw or some degree of appointment
- Random or lottery-based selection of eligible applicants

While flexibility is important, significant deviations from best practices are currently present in the nominating committee process. Effective governance depends on a structured approach, strategic alignment, and an objective evaluation of board candidates. Best practices emphasize skill-based appointments by a Board-approved group, but these varied approaches can hinder achieving this goal.

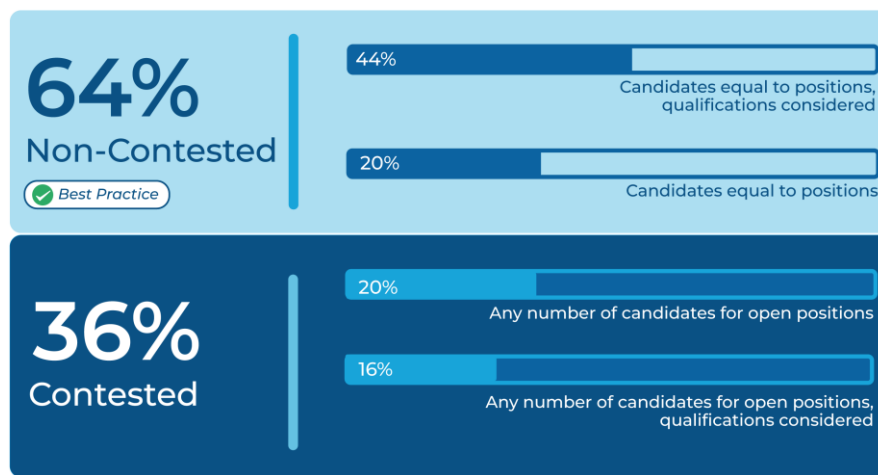
### Strategic Considerations

Effective governance requires intentional design. Combining skill-based nominations with a non-contested election process significantly enhances the effectiveness of the Nominating Committee. Clubs should also ensure committee independence to enhance objectivity, foster diverse perspectives, and recruit the skills needed to guide the club's strategic direction.

### Supporting the Non-Contested Election Best Practice

The format of board elections remains one of the most actively discussed governance topics in private clubs. According to the results in Figure 4, 64% of clubs utilize a non-contested election format, while 36% continue to rely on contested elections.

**Figure 4. Use of Non-Contested Elections as a Best Practice**



Note: Respondents were asked to identify which of the above options best describes the board member election process.

The non-contested model—where the number of candidates presented matches the number of open board seats—enables clubs to vet applicants and supports consistency, reduces the risk of misalignment, and fosters a more cohesive board dynamic. In contrast, contested elections introduce greater uncertainty. Clubs employing this approach face increased risks when selecting directors, which may result in conflicting agendas and potential governance issues.

### Club Leaders Opportunity

This research reveals a clear link between the effectiveness of the Nominating Committee and the use of best practices. Clubs that adopted both skill-based nominations and non-contested elections reported significantly higher effectiveness ratings, up to **15% higher** than those using neither of these methods. These results reinforce a key message: effective governance doesn't happen by chance—it's the result of intentional, well-structured processes. To increase governance effectiveness, boards can:

1. **Formalize and Structure the Nominating Committee:** Establish the Nominating Committee as a standing committee with clear authority, appropriate term lengths, and alignment with your club's succession needs.
2. **Enhance Committee Independence and Objectivity:** Strengthen the integrity of the nomination process by reducing board reliance and fostering unbiased, skills-based decision-making.
3. **Adopt a Non-Contested Election Model:** Utilize a board skills matrix to inform candidate selection and transition towards non-contested elections that align with the club's long-term priorities and industry best practices.
4. **Promote Transparency and Continuous Governance Evaluation:** Educate members about governance practices and regularly evaluate board effectiveness through structured self-assessments or third-party reviews.

Our findings continue to reinforce the connection between the quality of the Nominating Committee and overall board effectiveness. Simply put: strong nomination processes create stronger boards, which in turn lead to better governance.

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## 2025 Club Board Perspectives

# Rethinking Membership Access: Board Strategies for the Future of Membership

As demand for club access continues to grow, boards are rethinking traditional membership limits in favor of more flexible, data-driven models. They are adopting a more sophisticated approach to re-evaluate their membership structures to better align with evolving demand and usage.

By Ben Hopkinson, Michael Gregory and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

### Key Insights

- The majority of respondents support a flexible membership model that allows boards to adjust levels based on usage and financial needs.
- Younger board members favor optimizing categories while older members lean toward reducing total membership to address capacity.
- Intermediate-age member categories are the main focus for access adjustments among board member respondents, with senior transition and social members following closely.

Before the pandemic, many clubs managed member capacity by the book—quite literally, bound by bylaws. However, surging usage in recent years has revealed a flaw in that logic. Boards are starting to ask: Should our member limits reflect what's written, or what's happening at the club? Is reducing member numbers the best solution, or are there more strategic options to improve access?

Our most recent research, the 2025 Club Board Perspectives Study, which surveyed board members from private clubs across North America and was conducted in partnership with the National Club Association, reveals compelling insights into how board members view capacity and what can be done to manage it. Clubs that assess capacity based on actual member usage and

expectations—not fixed rules—are more likely to perceive available room and realize benefits while exploring various management strategies.

## Understanding Perceived Access Satisfaction

Overall, 76% of respondents reported a perception that members are satisfied with their ability to access the club's amenities (Figure 1). However, a closer look at the data reveals key differences. Younger board members, those under the age of 50, expressed lower perceived satisfaction levels (3.6/5) compared to the overall average of 4.0. In comparison, older board members, those over the age of 70, emerged as the group indicating the highest perceived satisfaction (4.1). These perceptions align with GGA's industry research, which shows that the oldest members are generally the most satisfied group with primary amenity access<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 1: Membership Access Perceived Satisfaction**



Note: Respondents were asked to rate their perceived level of member satisfaction in accessing amenities and facilities, with 1 indicating 'very dissatisfied' and 5 indicating 'very satisfied'.

Interestingly, clubs with the highest annual revenue, with at least \$20 million, reported the lowest average satisfaction score (3.7/5). This suggests that even clubs with greater resources are not immune to access challenges. Unlike other areas of member experience, perceived satisfaction with access did not differ between male and female board member respondents. These findings reinforce the importance of taking a segmented, tactical approach to evaluating access satisfaction.

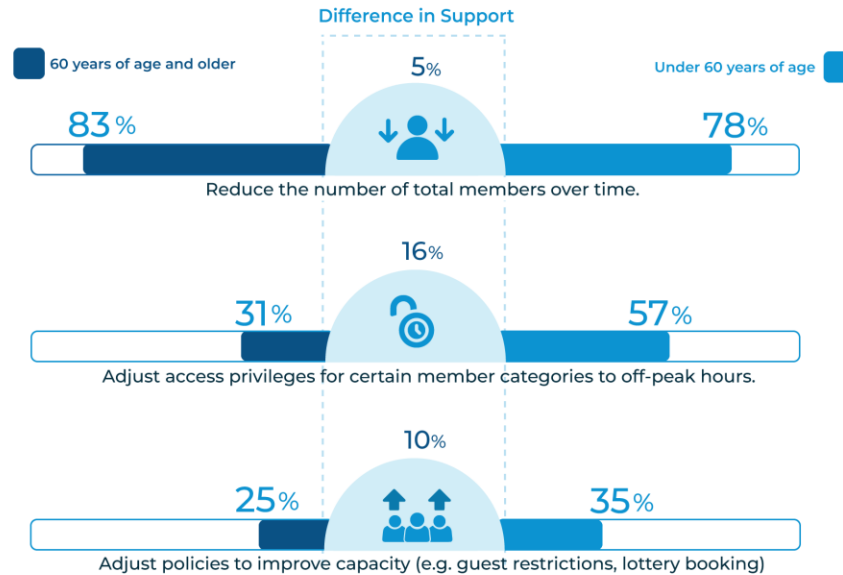
## Strategic Flexibility in Member Access

Support is growing for a more adaptive approach to managing member capacity, with 69% of survey respondents favoring a usage-based model over a more traditional, bylaw-defined membership limit. This result reflects a view that static thresholds no longer meet the dynamic needs of today's clubs. Instead, boards are looking to base their decisions on real-time data about how core amenities—such as golf, dining, and fitness—are being used.

Overall, a slight majority of respondents (57%) believe their current membership levels are appropriate given their club's utilization capacity. For respondents who expressed a sentiment of having too many members, board member generational differences in Figure 2 further illuminate how clubs might approach change.

<sup>2</sup> Our internal results show that over the past five years, members of the silent generation have generally been the most satisfied with access to golf as compared to other generations.

Figure 2: Preferences for Member Adjustments



Note: Respondents were asked to select the option they felt would be the most appropriate adjustment to improve member access. Since they could choose multiple options, the total exceeds 100%.

While both younger and older board members show strong support for reducing total membership over time (78% and 83%, respectively), they diverge significantly in their views on alternative strategies. Younger leaders are nearly twice as likely to support adjusting access privileges for certain categories to off-peak times (57% vs. 31%) and implementing policies that enhance access through operational changes (35% vs. 25%).

As boards consider future adjustments, the message is clear: static thresholds alone won't meet evolving member expectations. Instead, clubs can adopt a nuanced approach—grounded in usage data—that responds more effectively to demographic shifts and is flexible enough to accommodate membership adjustments as necessary.

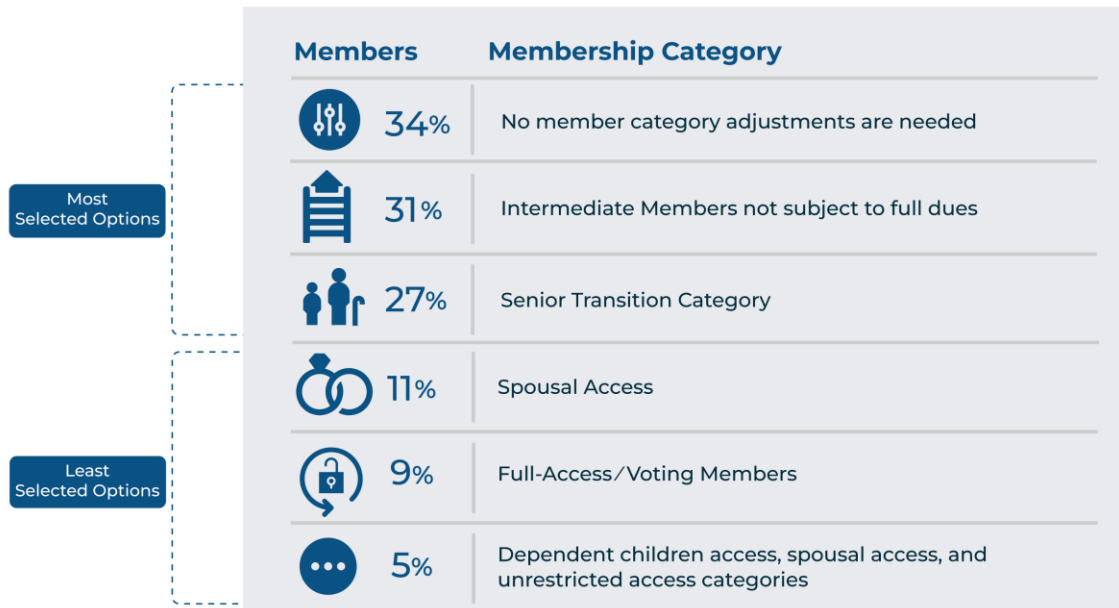
*Our deeper dive into the data reveals that governance matters to the member experience – best practice aligned clubs show better results when it comes to right sizing their clubs and using more contemporary methods to managing access.*

### Balancing Access and Long-Term Strategy

As boards face increasing pressure to manage access, attention is shifting toward adjustments in specific member categories. Intermediate members, classified as those younger than the transition age to full voting status, were identified by 31% of respondents as the top category for potential adjustment. Close behind were Senior Transition (27%) and Restricted Access (25%) groups.



Figure 3. Membership Category Adjustment Considerations



Note: Respondents were asked to select which of the included categories should have their access privileges, pricing and usage levels reviewed and potentially adjusted. Results do not equal 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

While one-third of respondents did not believe adjustments were needed at their clubs, potential member divisions emerge from deeper analysis. Generational differences, which are an ongoing concern of club leaders<sup>3,4</sup>, preferences for potential adjustments show a similar divergent pattern. Younger board members, those below 50, show significantly more support for adjusting senior transition categories (41% compared to an average of 27%). Similarly, older members show the highest level of support for adjusting intermediate members (38% compared to 31%).

### Strategic Considerations

While adjusting access or pricing for Intermediate members could provide short-term financial benefits, such as increasing financial yield, clubs should exercise caution before constricting the pipeline of younger members. Boards that act too aggressively in restricting Intermediate access today may later regret having turned away their future full members.

### Club Leaders Opportunity

As demand for club access continues to evolve, club leaders must move beyond static membership models and toward more data-informed, usage-based strategies to balance competing priorities. To accomplish this, leaders can:

<sup>3</sup> Club Members' Perspectives: Insights into the Changing Needs and Wants of Private Club Members (West Palm Beach, FL: GGA Partners), 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Club Leaders' Perspectives: Finding Success and Facing Challenges 2024 (West Palm Beach, FL: GGA Partners), 2024.

1. **Track and Report on Key Usage Metrics:** Identify key data points, such as peak usage times, amenity-specific demand, waitlist trends, and member visitation frequency, that should be consistently tracked and reported to the board.
2. **Treat Convenient Access as an Amenity.** Regularly gather member feedback, such as through annual surveys, to evaluate member satisfaction with current access and understand how members might change their usage habits in the future.
3. **Enable Flexibility for Membership Adjustments:** Review your bylaws and governance policies to determine what changes are necessary to enable the board to adjust member levels or access privileges annually, based on usage patterns and financial needs.
4. **Identify Pressure Points and Underutilized Assets:** Pinpoint locations of capacity constraints and areas for improvement to create strategies such as off-peak programming, incentive pricing, or targeted promotions, to redistribute usage more effectively.

By embracing flexibility and adopting a segmented approach to membership planning, clubs can better balance access, satisfaction, and financial sustainability. The way forward isn't about finding a universal formula, but rather making the correct adjustments for your club, your members, and your future.

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Visit [www.ggapartners.com/insights](http://www.ggapartners.com/insights) to discover more about how Boards are balancing competing priorities, explore insights from the Club Board Perspectives research, and learn how GGA Partners can support your club's long-term success.



Halfway

Clubhouse

Pro Shop

1<sup>st</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Tee







## Acknowledgments

Thank you to all participating clubs and our research partner, the National Club Association (NCA), for helping us gather the perspectives of board members across the private club industry. Your input has been crucial in understanding the priorities and issues that boards see as important to their club's success, providing a foundation for informed, future-focused leadership decisions.

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