# Return on Athletics®

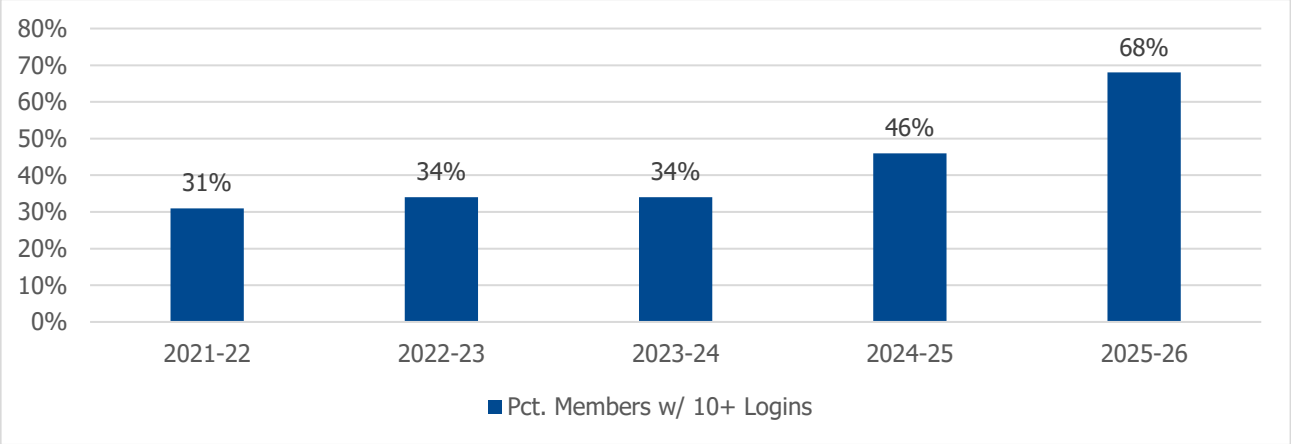
Return on Athletics® is designed to maximize the business performance of NAIA athletics departments. By collecting and analyzing member data, ROA enables data-driven decision-making, including peer benchmarks, financial insights, and actionable research to strengthen recruitment, retention, and financial sustainability.

ROA's strategic charge is to enhance the initiative's impact by providing resources that foster greater engagement and inform decisions that positively impact members' bottom lines.

**Membership Impact**
ROA provides NAIA members with data-driven insights and resources to support informed decision-making through four key offerings: the ROA benchmarking and comparison tool, the Winning Decisions education platform, association-level research, and custom reporting for both current and prospective members.

Through March, 68% of NAIA institutions have logged in to the ROA tool at least 10 times, marking the highest engagement percentage for ROA to date. Most ROA users (over 65%) in 2025-26 are athletics directors and assistant athletics directors, which aligns with past-year trends.

**ROA Scorecard Metric: Pct. of Members who log in to ROA 10+ times**




**ROA Scorecard Metric: Pct. Presidents who state ROA have informed decisions**

| Year | Percentage |
|---|---|
| 2022-23 | 27% |
| 2023-24 | 32% |
| 2024-25 | 51% |
| 2025-26 | TBD* |

**The annual presidential survey has not yet been completed*

While the 2025-26 presidential survey has not been completed, ROA has seen consistent growth among executives, indicating that the data and resources have informed the campus's decision-making process.

While the national office staff works to evolve the ROA benchmarking tool to be as helpful as possible, conducting custom reports and analysis for member institutions is a growth area.

In the past year, the ROA team has developed over 45 custom reports, including at least 30 analyses for NAIA members. The custom reporting can vary in size and scope, but the feedback on the expanded work in this area has been positive. Additionally, the work in this area has been productive in informing potential areas of association-level research.

**Membership Recruitment**

ROA has been fully integrated into the membership sales process through two key channels: custom data analysis and reporting, and the Pathways Program. As a result, nearly all prospects and applicants now engage with ROA before membership approval.

Custom ROA reports provide prospective members with data-driven insights on institution fit within the NAIA, highlighting opportunities to positively impact athletic department business performance. Over the past calendar year, 15 custom reports were completed for NCAA DII and DIII prospects, with additional analyses underway pending the return of prospect data.

These custom efforts have ranged from comprehensive multi-page analysis reports to on-campus conversations with institutional leaders exploring the opportunities available through NAIA membership.

As detailed in the membership recruitment and retention report, integrating ROA into the sales process has strengthened the team's ability to reach its goal of seven applications and deepen engagement with NCAA DII and DIII prospects.

**Official launch of new ROA Platform**

The 2026 convention serves as the official launch of the "new" ROA, which is fully integrated into the NAIA Connect environment. The redesign, the first significant overhaul since the system's original launch in the spring of 2019, is intended to help members better demonstrate, evaluate, and strengthen the return athletics bring to campus.

New features include:

- Multi-year athletics department trend reporting
- Deeper conference and association comparison analytics
- Enhanced decision-making dashboards
- Reduced manual entry through pre-populated data
- Integrated access through NAIA Connect

Last fall, 15 institutions served as a test group for the data collection process. Overall, the feedback was positive, and only minor bugs were found. The first full membership data collection will occur in the 2026 reporting cycle.

After the convention, communication to introduce the new and improved ROA will begin. This will include initial training materials and updated content in Winning Decisions sent to members. During the summer months, the focus will shift to data collection training. A series of webinars will be held, supported by materials such as FAQs, how-to guides, and a glossary of terms.

**Winning Decisions**
ROA Winning Decisions is an educational program designed to help cabinet-level executives better use ROA to make informed decisions.

The program, available in the NAIA Connect Learning Hub, has four interactive modules: ROA foundations, four KPIs to know, using ROA to evaluate and grow current sports programs, and using ROA to inform decisions through comparison.

**Association-Level Research & Resource Development**
In case you missed it in the fall, new association-level research has been added to the ROA research library on NAIA.org and the NAIA's Playbook Blog.

The new briefs include:

- Retention and Roster Size: Finding the "Sweet Spot" For Football
- Net Return from Athletics: A Closer Look
- The Cost of Winning: Exploring the Relationship Between Total Athletics Expenses and Competitive Success