



**GLOBAL RESEARCH
BUSINESS NETWORK**
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GRBN Guidance for National Research Associations

The 12 Benefits of Association Membership

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1. Background

The aim of this guideline is to summarise the significant benefits that arise from membership of a national research association.

National research associations provide representative and collective products and services to businesses and individuals with a common interest in research and research-related activities.

In return for a subscription fee, national research associations offer products and services such as training, conferences, publications, networking opportunities which are suitable for the needs of the members and the market they serve. In addition to such tangible activities, the main focus for many Associations will be as a representative body, putting forward the collective view and position of its members to government, regulators, the media, opinion formers and the public. In their presentation and advocacy of the collective view of research, the national research association establishes a clear and cohesive identity and image of the research sector in that country, which is then conveyed internationally.

2. The Growth Cycle for National Research Associations

If national research associations get the balance right between membership fees and the products and services it provides to its members, it should experience growth which will enable it to better service the sector (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: The Virtuous Membership Growth Cycle for National Research Associations

3. General Benefits of Membership of National Research Associations

Table 1 summarises the general benefits of national research associations. Not all associations will necessarily provide all the products and services listed, particularly smaller or newer associations which may find it more cost effective to concentrate on 'core' benefits.

Table 1: Benefits of Membership of National Associations

	Benefits of Membership of National Research Associations	Why a benefit?
1	<p>PROFESSIONAL & INDUSTRY INFORMATION</p> <p>Specialist advice targeted on the needs of the market that the National Research Association serves.</p> <p>For example: professional standards, policy advice, process and quality standards, technical standards, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services will be targeted and specialized to the needs of the sector e.g. legal advice from a national research association will reflect the needs of the domestic market and show an understanding of the specific research-related issues, compared to legal advice from elsewhere which will tend to be more general in nature. • Counsel and guidance related to business practices and operations, including legal issues, financial and human resources management, marketing, procurement and strategic planning. • Confidential, and potentially sensitive, information can be gathered and shared among the membership. • Up-to-date information and sector alerts can be easily compiled and shared among the membership. • Members can input directly into the advice and guidance developed by the national research association for the sector to ensure it is practical and relevant, meeting the needs of the market.
2	<p>POWERFUL ADVOCACY</p> <p>Protecting and promoting the sector to government, regulators and opinion formers. National research associations are the primary and principal advocates of the research sector and of its self-regulation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments and regulators prefer to liaise with national research associations than individual research businesses or individuals, as they need to ensure that they are receiving fully considered and representative views of whole sectors. • By speaking as a collective the

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		<p>sector is more strongly represented than by speaking individually. As national research association's membership grow, its strength as a voice of the sector increases, due to increased representativeness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National research associations will understand and have access to the full history of previous representations and are able to access and use this information, including previously established networks, to strengthen their positions when making representations on behalf of the sector. • National research associations can efficiently and effectively collate targeted business evidence, case studies and information about legislative impacts on the market it serves; strengthening its position to make persuasive and strong representations to protect the sector. • National research associations can build proactive policies, develop strategic alliances and practical sector solutions in partnership and collaboration with governments and regulators.
3	<p>INDUSTRY VOICE</p> <p>Voice of the sector within the media; able to represent the research sector across all methodologies, levels and perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National research associations are able to put forward a fully informed views of the sector. • Individual members, which may be less known outside the sector, have a higher chance of media recognition if promoted via the national research association.
4	<p>PROFESSIONAL & ETHICAL STANDARDS</p> <p>Protecting the reputation of the sector and its self-regulation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National research associations require members to sign up to a mandatory and enforceable Code of ethical and professional standards. National research associations monitor compliance to these standards and provide mechanisms for complaints and/or disciplinary action. • National research associations

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		<p>provide a clear pathway for government, media, regulators, business and the public to make complaints, making it easier to resolve issues efficiently and effectively.</p>
5	<p>INDUSTRY AND PROCESS STANDARDS</p> <p>Strengthening the standards that underpin the practice of research through the development of research and research-related process and quality standards e.g. ISO 20252 and ISO 26362</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National research associations, as a condition of membership, require members to give some form of commitment to the adherence to quality and process standards to ensure that research conducted by its members meet the minimum required standards. • National research associations are providing confidence to research buyers and users that members of the association are undertaking research in adherence with industry agreed quality and process standards and requirements. • National research associations are the primary contacts for the development of international standards. ISO seeks representatives from national research associations to represent national research markets.
6	<p>RELEVANT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>National research associations provide access to relevant training, professional development and higher education opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National research associations provide members with access to relevant and up to date training and professional development including CPD programmes, courses, workshops, conferences, seminars, webinars and workshops. • National research associations often have links and/or partnerships with educational institutions that provide that provide training and qualifications for maintaining and improving competence of professionals and the industry.
7	<p>PROFESSIONAL & COMPANY RECOGNITION</p> <p>Use of national research association marque and branding on corporate materials as a 'badge of membership'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of Members by clients, commissioners and buyers as 'reputable' service suppliers. • Recognition that Members meet and understand the standards that are a

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		<p>membership requirement for national research association e.g. Codes of Conduct/Practice, ISOs, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance reputation of business and individuals through recognition of what membership of national research association means: a credential of quality, of consistency and objectivity in research processes, and of accountability in business practices.
8	<p>MARKET INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>Information sources unique to the sector. For example research, industry statistics and market intelligence information, as well as emerging issues within the industry and outside influences that will affect the research sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National research associations understand the needs of their markets and therefore are better placed to collect and collate information which is useful to markets Information can be collected on a confidential basis, and as a third party serving the sector, in an unbiased way.
9	<p>MEMBER DISCOUNTS</p> <p>Discounts on products and services provided by national research association.</p> <p>For example: access to special rates through affinity services, negotiated discounts, preferential rates etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More cost effective to access relevant services as a Member than to buy on the open market as a non-Member. Allows Members to access bigger discounts than would be available individually.
10	<p>EXCLUSIVE NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>National research associations facilitate networking through networks, chapters, special industry groups, conferences, seminars, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National research association networking is local, targeted and focused and is a cost effective way of accessing peer-to-peer networking. Membership networking enables Members to learn from others who share similar background and face similar challenges.
11	<p>MEMBERSHIP OF REGIONAL ALLIANCES</p> <p>National research associations belong to regional and international alliances, facilitating global networking and information sharing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National research associations all over the world work together, sharing information and guidance to strengthen research globally. By being part of a global network, members of national research associations can reach beyond their

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		<p>country borders to clients and suppliers all over the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of national research associations can reach out to other associations within regional and international alliances to access information to assist in conducting business, for example undertaking cross-border research across multiple territories.
12	<p>MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>National research associations promote their members through their products and services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National research associations provide opportunities for member organisations and individuals to advertise their services through their directories; publications and their association website. Sponsorship opportunities for national research association conferences and events are also opportunities for members to promote their services to other members and clients.