Member Snapshot

2017 IAIA MEMBERSHIP FEEDBACK SURVEY

The experts, practitioners, educators, researchers, and policy makers that make up IAIA have valuable insight to share. We recently asked them to tell us more about themselves and what they value, as well as input on the state of impact assessment today and what may come. These results give us a snapshot of both our membership and the field—we think you will find them as interesting as we have.

Marla Orenstein
IAIA President
Who are IAIA members?

The results in this document were generated from 478 responses to the October 2017 survey. As of survey time, IAIA had 1,662 members from 108 countries. The distribution of membership is heavily influenced by the location of each year's conference; this survey gives us a snapshot in time.

Age

- <35: 12%
- 35-44: 26%
- 45-54: 28%
- >64: 10%
- Not specified: 1%

Employment Sector

- Private Consultancy: 39%
- Government: 23%
- Academic/Research Institution: 18%
- NGO/Civil Society Organization: 7%
- Bank/Financial Institution: 5%
- Private Sector/Business: 4.5%
- More than 10 years: 3.5%

Gender

- Female: 41.5%
- Male: 57.5%
- Not specified: 1%

Length of IAIA Membership

- Less than 1 year: 24%
- 1-2 years: 15%
- 3-5 years: 19.5%
- 6-10 years: 19%
- More than 10 years: 22.5%
Area(s) of Professional Expertise (members chose all that apply)

- Socio-economic impacts 40%
- Strategic Environmental Assessment 35%
- Public participation 30%
- Ecosystems 25%
- Cumulative Effects Assessment 25%
- Climate change 20%
- Water 20%
- Biodiversity 20%
- Sustainability Assessment 20%
- Follow up and monitoring 20%
- Indigenous peoples’ issues 20%
- Other 15%
- Cultural impacts 15%
- Resettlement and livelihoods 15%
- Education and capacity building 15%
- Wildlife 15%
- Health impacts 15%
- Vegetation/soils 15%
- Air 10%
- Gender and human rights 10%
- Corporate stewardship 10%
- Noise 10%
- Disasters/conflict management 5%

You may have noticed that environmental impact assessment (EIA) was not listed above. Because of the many categories within EIA, we chose to list each subcategory as a separate option rather than having EIA itself as an option.

Role(s) with respect to Impact Assessment (members chose all that apply)

- I am a technical specialist for IAs. (47%)
- I am a project manager or coordinator for IAs. (41%)
- I am an academic/researcher who studies or teaches about IA. (30%)
- I commission or review IAs. (29%)
- I have a different role. (17%)
Why join IAIA?

Special-interest Sections, annual conferences and symposia, an online networking platform—IAIA’s resources help members connect and learn.

Members reported that IAIA is valuable in their ability to:

- Stay current with news and developments in impact assessment (99%)
- Improve their professional practice (98%)
- Connect with special-interest Sections (96%)
- Influence IA policy and practice at a local, regional, and/or global level (90%)
- Demonstrate their company’s commitment to IA standards and ethics (83%)
- Identify work opportunities (79%)

Which IAIA member benefits and other resources do members find valuable?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IAIA MEMBER BENEFITS</th>
<th>Very important or valuable</th>
<th>Moderately important or valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to IAPA journal</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online training from the EIA Campus</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAIA Work Experience Program</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of ethics</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounts for conference</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAIAConnect</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searchable member directory</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Central jobs board</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC RESOURCES ON IAIA WEBSITE</th>
<th>Very important or valuable</th>
<th>Moderately important or valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publications: Best Practice documents</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications: Ref. &amp; guidance documents</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Program</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference proceedings</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training courses, webinars, &amp; videos</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications: FasTips</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications: Key Citations</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members-only resources</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAIA News blog</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications: Translated documents</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMING SOON! The survey asked for member feedback on several proposed resources, and because of popular demand, IAIA is excited to introduce a searchable directory of national regulatory agencies as a member benefit later this year.
Why join IAIA?

Networking is regularly reported as the most valuable benefit of IAIA membership and events.

Have developed professional relationships with individuals or organizations through IAIA

These relationships have contributed to professional activities by generating leads, project collaboration, etc.

Would recommend IAIA to colleagues as a useful resource

Networking through IAIA enables:

- Meeting people to contact in the future as a resource: 78%
- Finding people with whom to collaborate on future projects: 67%
- Making social connections with colleagues: 50%
- Connecting with potential customers/clients: 29%
- Meeting with people in the same organization who are located elsewhere: 19%
- Finding new employees: 16%

Networking is regularly reported as the most valuable benefit of IAIA membership and events.

The community of practice is focused on issues I take very seriously. IAIA brings together the best minds and people in the IA world.

“IAIA has a bit of a family atmosphere to it. It is also the most international and diverse association I am aware of. Being able to connect and exchange ideas with people from the other end of the globe is incredibly valuable.”

“Immediate relevance to my consulting work.”

“It provides a window to international standards, experience and perspectives.”

How is IAIA membership unique?

The networking
Its international scope and perspective
Its practicality and relevance

Diversity of membership

Balance between IA practice and research
The conference

Number of IAIA Conferences and Symposia Attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Events</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never attended an IAIA conference or symposia</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 event</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 events</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 events</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or more events</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The practice of impact assessment

With a combined 10,000 impact assessments in the past three years alone, IAIA members have vast knowledge to share. IAIA connects these members from a variety of fields and locations, harnessing that collective knowledge.

In the past three years, members responding to the survey have worked on nearly 10,000 impact assessments (IAs).

The top three skills that members could use help developing are:

- Quantitative research methods and modeling (69%)
- Stakeholder conflict resolution (68%)
- Innovation (67%)

Additional skills that members would like to further develop include:

- Qualitative research methods (58%)
- Stakeholder engagement (56%)
- Understanding decision-making processes (48%)
- Budgeting (47%)
- Project management (46%)
- Managing clients (45%)
- Managing consultants (41%)
- Writing skills (32%)
- Ethics (31%)
Based on their experience, members shared how much they see various groups benefitting from impact assessment.

Members rated the most important factors for impact assessment (IA) to positively affect decision-making and project development.

Members share how often they have experienced the following topics being considered within an impact assessment.
Members shared their thoughts on the main challenges facing impact assessment today. The common themes included:

- Political will
- Demonstrating relevance
- Communication
- Funding
- Over-, under-, and changing regulation
- Regulator competency
- Respectful engagement of Indigenous communities
- Impact assessment capacity
- Moving impact assessment practice forward
- Implementation and monitoring of projects
- Schisms within impact assessment

“Growing political and economic opposition to IA in the face of deteriorating economies and social conditions.”

“Traditional resistance from proponents on basis of perceived cost and time and from community on basis of perceived procedural unfairness/foregone conclusions.”

“It should inform the design process more fully; but with the perception that it remains a regulatory burden, I fear that it might be an easy whipping boy in the face of pressures to cut ‘red tape.’”

Despite these challenges, members explained that impact assessment is a tool uniquely suited for the future.

- Impact assessment is already an integrated decision-making tool, spanning environment, economy, and human health. Impact assessment professionals represent many sectors and disciplines, allowing a unique level of interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary collaboration and research.

- Increased public and media attention on environmental and social issues means a broader understanding of the need to reduce the negative impacts of projects. Similarly, the visibility of crises globally means a broader awareness of the need for cross-sector solutions, both in preventing disasters and in reacting to them. This paradigm shift is helping to mainstream impacts into project design.

- Technological advances, such as the rise of online professional resources and forums coupled with increasing access to internet globally, means it is now easier than ever to quickly access information, seek feedback from others in the field, and include stakeholders in the impact assessment process.

- There is a world-unifying policy in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and impact assessment is poised to play a large role in meeting each of those goals.

- Impact assessment is being adopted and written into law in a growing number of countries, and it is the key sustainable development-oriented tool in many countries. Funding agencies, such as the World Bank, have also embraced impact assessment, often requiring impact assessment as a condition for approving funding.

- With megaprojects happening around the globe and the overwhelming need for infrastructure development in growing cities, impact assessment’s existing role in these processes will only grow.

- Communities are demanding a greater say in how projects are undertaken, and there is a growing commitment to deliberative, participatory processes. The impact assessment process has long incorporated public participation, leading to community participation and empowerment."
In light of the political and economic changes taking place worldwide, impact assessment may change over the coming five years. Here are the forecasts of IAIA members.

How frequently will impact assessment be conducted?

How much government support will impact assessment have?

How much community support will impact assessment have?

How often will impact assessment be a part of regulatory decision-making?

How important will impact assessment be in relation to other political considerations?

How trusted will the information produced by impact assessment be?

Transport, tourism, and agriculture were ranked as the most promising new sectors for the future use of impact assessment.

The following fields may have unique tools or methods from which impact assessment practice could learn.
Looking forward, members shared specific ideas for potential opportunities in the use of impact assessment. Many suggestions were made; here are a few examples.

**Establishing the business case to companies of why impact assessment is both good for business as well as just good business.** Practitioners could more clearly demonstrate how impact assessment can help to reduce total project costs for the company. Plus, there is an increased pressure on companies to prove good corporate governance and social responsibility, which means companies are seeking ways to earn their social license to operate. By showing them the economic, social, and environmental costs of not following quality impact assessment processes at the design stage of projects and policies, impact assessment is further promoted.

**Simplifying processes and coordinating the analyses across specialties.** By streamlining assessments and making them more accessible and transparent, impact assessment would become easier to understand. Such an integration of specialties may also ease the mainstreaming of impact assessment into, for example, the engineering community.

**Addressing main environmental issues, such as cyclone impacts.** In this time of environmental catastrophes, impact assessment can prove it is a necessary support to planning and decision-making.

**Relying more on risk assessment.** Impact assessment is an ideal process for forming a view on what is likely to happen and estimating when, making it ideal for dealing with imminent problems.

**Harmonizing regulations at regional levels.** Projects are often required to meet various regulations from different levels of government or different countries, which can cause confusion and makes it more difficult for stakeholders to understand the exact requirements. Harmonization of regulations could assist in simplifying the environmental and social requirements of projects, or at least make it clearer as to the expectations for compliance.

**Improving public consultation so that it is meaningful and integrated throughout the assessment process.** Public participation should start early to help build understanding and trust among the stakeholders and communities. Consultations should be integrated throughout the process so as to allow the public real opportunities to influence the project and outcomes.

**Becoming more proactive in guiding development.** Rather than focusing on project-specific development or just ensuring regulatory compliance, impact assessment could start turning its focus to promoting sustainable practices and infrastructure design and catalyzing development, such as by reclaiming the role of impact assessment as the principal value-add in development financial institution safeguards requirements.
Incorporating traditional knowledge as an equal assessment methodology. In some parts of the world, there are requirements to include traditional knowledge in assessments. There exist opportunities to do much more in this area, such as providing guidance on methodology and developing approaches to ensure this knowledge is integrated into impact assessment processes.

Addressing climate change. The climate change phenomena is forcing governments to realize the use of impact assessment and thus could be used as a catalyst to ensure the development agenda runs parallel with environment conservation measures. One example would be developing guidance on how to meaningfully evaluate greenhouse gas emissions, determining whether they are significant enough to warrant considerable expenditures on mitigation or non-approval of the project.

Utilizing the rise of social networks. Democratisation—use social media to focus impact assessment and make it relevant and politically powerful.

Focusing on the application of information technology, digital data, and innovative digital delivery methods. By conducting stakeholder engagement online, presenting more information online (especially non-technical information), and even transitioning to on-line interactive EISs/EIAs, impact assessment could be modernized.

“The main opportunities of EIA come from the work of transforming societies, allowing a better equality of opportunity for all.”

“In this time of environmental catastrophes, IA can prove it is not a redundant tool but a necessary support to planning/decision-making.”

“In Scotland, we remain committed to EU regulations. However, this may be challenged through the Brexit process. Independence would bring a new opportunity to develop our own regulations.”

“Natural disasters have highlighted climate change and the vulnerability of the environment to the general public, creating buy-in to the IA process.”

“In northern Canada, the mobilization of Native groups and the commissioning of their own IA procedures and standards is a refreshing opportunity.”

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