



Choosing an industry or business association

An industry or business association (or group) brings together like-minded people who are connected by industry, profession or geographical area. The role of associations is to protect and promote the interests of their members and provide access to industry-specific information and training. Industry associations differ from chambers of commerce and business associations, which represent the interests of businesses within a particular region, usually across different industries.

You are likely to need an association when:

- starting a business
- seeking information on the latest trends and regulations impacting your industry
- you want to meet and network with people in your industry

Associations allow you to benefit by:

- being part of a larger network of people and businesses
- being able to access services that would be difficult or expensive to do on your own
- being part of a group that may influence government decisions
- helping you to stay abreast of the latest industry news, trends and developments
- providing access to membership directories which can increase your exposure to new markets and potential clients

Top tips

- Undertake research and choose your association carefully. Some industries may only have one association, while others may offer a number of organisations, each with a slightly different focus.
- Be clear on what you want to gain from your membership. Most associations have fees; don't pay for services or information you won't use. Joining several associations can become expensive, so make sure you are receiving real value for money.
- Seek opportunities to actively participate and contribute to the association so that both you and your industry can benefit.
- Ensure they provide plenty of networking opportunities to enable you to maximise your business presence and make new contacts.
- Make sure the lines of communication within the association are open and that they actively seek information and feedback from members.

Questions to ask

What are the aims of the association?

What value will you and your business gain from joining? Ask the executive what they offer and speak with members to discover what value they receive.

Do they offer discounted services or products to members?

Some associations have significant buying power and are able to offer reduced rates for their members, for example in relation to insurance, printing or industry-specific items.

Do they provide industry specific resources to help systemise businesses?

Many associations offer online resources to help you establish your business, for example industry-specific operational systems or templates.

Do they have up-to-date industry research?

Industry associations sometimes conduct market research, with the results usually available to members without charge.

Do they offer training courses, workshops or seminars?

Are industry-specific training sessions available for members, either face-to-face or online? Is there a cost for this training?

Do they offer any accreditation programs?

Gaining accreditation for recognised industry standards is a great way to ensure the long-term sustainability of your business and to highlight your credibility and commitment to customers.

How often do they meet and are members encouraged to attend?

Associations are usually structured around a committee that meets regularly to ensure they are operating smoothly and legally. As a member you should have the right to attend these meetings and to join the committee.

Are members allowed to promote their products and services to other members?

Member-based newsletters can provide you with opportunities to promote your products or services. Many associations also have websites and other promotional tools you may be able to use to advertise your business.

For more information visit smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

Note: This information is not a substitute for legal advice.