



4736 Onondaga Blvd, PMB 157 Syracuse New York 13219

www.hsaofcny.org

Associations Proving Economic Empowerment

By: Emad A. Rahim, M.S.M, M.P.M

In many industries and professions, associations are the only source of continuing education. Associations educate their members on technical and scientific matters, business practices, and legal issues; thereby elevating the quality of publicly delivered goods and services.

Associations collect and disseminate information on industries, issues, and trends--providing valuable background and context for legislative, regulatory, and policy decisions. By informing the public about the efficiency, quality, and safety of products and services, associations help bolster public confidence in the marketplace.

Associations develop and disseminate valuable data that might otherwise be unavailable--information used by policy makers, regulators, researchers, journalists, consumer groups, and others--to enhance a broad understanding and analysis of the economy. Governments are often dependent upon research and statistics provided by associations.

Associations play a prominent role in setting performance, technical, and safety standards; ethical codes; and professional certification programs. All of these efforts help to reduce the risks that consumers face in the marketplace. Associations also save taxpayers money by fulfilling these vital functions that the government would otherwise have to fulfill. Standardization provides an international language to help shrink barriers to trade.

Founded upon the principles of volunteerism and cooperation, associations nurture involvement in society and community service. By pooling their talents and resources, association members help the needy, provide disaster relief, mentor youth, and clean up the environment. Association activities generate what is known as *social capital*. Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital facilitates coordination and cooperation, it is not just the sum of the institutions that underpin a society--it is the glue that holds them together. Social networks can increase productivity by reducing the costs of doing business. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable.