

ESD

ANNUAL REPORT



INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
OF ESD PROFESSIONALS



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Welcome



WELCOME

“Industries do not create associations because they are fashionable. They create them when informal networks stop being enough.”

Welcome to the International Association of ESD Professionals, and welcome to our 2025 Annual Report.

Whether you are a long-standing member of this community, a practitioner exploring what professional recognition looks like, a funder or partner considering where to invest, or someone encountering Empowerment Self Defense for the very first time—we wrote this report for you. We wanted you to see what we see: a profession coming into its own.

Every section of this report tells a piece of a larger story. You'll meet the people who guide our standards and governance. You'll see how a growing global market is reshaping the demand for qualified, ethical safety education. You'll learn about milestones in credentialing and accreditation that are turning "ESD professional" into a designation the public and institutions can trust. And you'll discover a flagship initiative that is already opening doors—and creating paid opportunities—for practitioners on three continents.

What makes all of this possible is not any single organization. It is the collective decision of ESD professionals around the world to hold themselves—and each other—to a higher standard. That decision is the heartbeat of this association, and it echoes through every accomplishment documented in these pages.

Our field sits at a remarkable threshold. Public awareness of personal safety education is expanding, institutional interest is accelerating, and the conversation about what qualified instruction looks like has never been louder. The IAESDP exists to make sure that conversation is led by the people who do this work every day—not shaped for us by outsiders.

If you are already part of this community, thank you. Your expertise, your courage, and your willingness to grow alongside your peers are what give this work its weight. If you are not yet a member, we hope these pages show you why so many professionals have chosen to make the IAESDP their professional home—and why we would love to welcome you, too.

With gratitude and resolve,

All of us at the International Association of ESD Professionals



Our Vision

To establish Empowerment Self Defense as a key tool in Global Violence Prevention.



Our Mission

To engender trust and public safety in and within the broader Self Defense Industry through standards setting in Self Defense practice.

We accomplish this through Empowerment Self Defense Professionals support services—including credentialing and continuing education, public awareness campaigns focusing on the benefits of Empowerment Self Defense Practice, and increased global reach through official agency funding.



Our Values

We Believe:

That the public has the right to access Self Defense Education that is safe, trauma-informed, and effective;

That Self Defense Instructors must be trained to deliver safe, trauma-informed, effective programs;

That Empowerment Self Defense must be the standard upon which Self Defense courses are built;

That the public has the right to access to vetted Self Defense Instructors, free from concerns about malpractice and abusive behaviors on their Instructors part;

That Self Defense Instructors need access to continuing education, industry support, and business tools to succeed in delivering effective Self Defense Programs;

That these educational and business opportunities must be free from bias, not favoring one certificate program over another, leaving the Instructor free to choose the right fit for their needs;

That the work of teaching and supporting our communities through ESD education deserves fair compensation, commensurate with the work delivered; and,

That the Self Defense industry has an obligation to deliver a certain amount of volunteer/pro bono services to communities in need.



“When we are in balance, we will be able to give and serve others as well as making the space for them to give and serve us.”

Dan Millman, author

LETTER FROM MICHELE OUR BOARD CHAIR

To our ESD Community and Professionals,

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the incredible resilience and growth of our international professional organization. In a world where events can feel overwhelming at times, the work of Empowerment Self-Defense (ESD) professionals stands as a testament to what is possible when we are intentional and move with purpose.

For many, you provide not only hope but are a catalyst for practical, life-changing growth and empowerment. This is why our commitment to one another is so vital and why we must continue to challenge ourselves in our own growth as instructors, continually seeking and sharing our knowledge while strengthening and supporting each other across borders and disciplines.

Over the past year, the association has been a part of or offered support in Training the Trainer, virtual learning opportunities, and explored new and innovative ways to grow and develop opportunities for ESD professionals. Every class, training, collaboration, all our collective efforts are a movement toward violence prevention and true empowerment for all. It is your commitment, your passion, and your belief that ESD be accessible to every individual, regardless of their circumstances so that every person has the tools to feel and be safe.

Let's make 2026 a transformative year filled with continued growth and connection.

In solidarity and peace,

Michele Elefante
Chair, Board of Directors



LETTER FROM THE ECC CHAIR, POY DE LARA

Strong standards do more than define a profession—they protect people, strengthen practice, and ensure that empowerment is delivered with integrity. This principle guides the work of the Empowerment Self Defense Credentialing Committee (ECC) and informs how we approach our responsibility to the field.

The ECC exists to safeguard the credibility, consistency, and long-term development of Empowerment Self-Defense. As Chair of the Committee, I am honored to help steward this work on behalf of the International Association of ESD Professionals (IAESDP) and the communities ultimately served by ESD practitioners.

The ECC is an independent committee composed of ESD professionals, related industry experts, and representatives of the public. It serves as the decision-making body for policies governing the IAESDP's Credentialing and Accreditation Programs. This includes establishing best practices for the ESD industry, setting minimum curriculum and program requirements, and ensuring that conflict-resolution pathways remain ethical, consistent, and transparent.

The Committee operates in alignment with the standards of the National Committee for Credentialing Agencies (NCCA) and the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), and meets applicable requirements of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). These frameworks ensure that ECC processes are rigorous, impartial, and grounded in accountability and public trust.

While the IAESDP provides administrative support through staff, systems, and financial resources, the ECC remains independent in its deliberations and decisions. This separation is essential to maintaining the integrity of credentialing and accreditation activities and to upholding confidence in the ESD profession.



The scope of the ECC's work includes credential examination development and oversight, as well as the accreditation of ESD certification and training programs. Through this work, the IAESDP continues to advance its objective of establishing Empowerment Self-Defense as a recognized standard for self-defense instruction—one that is ethical, evidence-informed, and responsive to real-world practice.

Looking ahead, the ECC will continue to refine standards, strengthen oversight mechanisms, and support continuous quality improvement across credentialing and accreditation processes. As the ESD field grows and evolves, the Committee remains committed to ensuring that growth is matched by clarity, competence, and accountability.

I extend my appreciation to the Committee members and IAESDP leadership for their collaboration and diligence throughout the year, and I look forward to the work ahead.

Poy de Lara, CTSS, TRLC, CFFCC, ESDP

*Chair, Empowerment Self Defense
Credentialing Committee (ECC)*

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For the IAESDP, 2024 was a year for rebuilding, 2025 became a year of planning and preparation, and 2026 is shaping up to be the year that offers us, as an Industry, the capacity to truly shape the future.

Around the world, we are experiencing the discomfort and uncertainty that precedes generational change. We are not reading about historical moments, we are watching them unfold in real time, being affected by them, responding to them, and finding a way through them. ESD Professionals, Instructors, and Students are far better equipped to navigate these times of turmoil—the kind that demand strength, flexibility, and resilience—precisely because of the ESD Education and training we have received and practice every day. This sets what we teach apart from other programs. We prepare people for life, not just danger, not just threat.

It is time for us to bring these skills to the public on a global scale.

After two years of restructuring and rebuilding, the IAESDP is moving into a new phase in its responsibility to our industry:

Part of our responsibility to you, the ESD Provider Community, is the creation of jobs, increase of public discussion and recognition of need, and increase of public demand for our services. We have done the foundational work to generate this demand and now we move toward driving it.

This year, we are dedicating our Annual Report to outlining our pathway to international recognition as a valuable tool in not just ending violence, but in preventing it for generations to come.

We hope you will join us in celebrating what we have accomplished and in shaping what our collective future will be.



This is your invitation. It is time.
Fight Forward, my friends!

Lissette E. Brassac-Fitzgerald, ESDP
Executive Director
International Association of ESD Professionals



Who We Are



IAEDSP STAFF

Lissette Brassac-Fitzgerald, ESDP – CEO

Nashville, TN, USA

After trading a 20-year career in Marketing and Editorial for her true calling, Lissette founded ASSERT Empowerment Self Defense with her partner, building a nationwide movement to certify and support ESD instructors who empower marginalized communities.

As Executive Director of the International Association of ESD Professionals, she brings expertise in curriculum development, instructor training, trauma-informed practices, and organizational leadership—plus experience running ASSERT Professionals, which serves clients ranging from corporate teams to law enforcement to special operations units.

What ESD Means to me

Whether she's teaching trauma-informed ESD to LGBTQ+ youth, developing culturally-relevant safety protocols, or teaching Martial Arts in Nashville with her spouse—Cat, opinionated cat—Ku Bu no Neko-do, and spicy Siberian Husky—Leto Atalanta, Lissette's mission remains the same: bringing women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, immigrant, and underserved communities to the table as recognized experts in safety and security. She firmly believes we're all born with a dictionary



filled by our experiences—but reminds us we need to carry 8 billion thesauri and one very open mind if we're ever going to communicate effectively and grow (and yes, she's still working on mastering that herself).

Bianka Urbanovska, ESDP – Identity Guardian

Bratislava, Slovakia

Visual Language
Website and Asset Branding
Social Media Branding

What started off as a need to feel safe in a foreign country became a life mission. Bianka is a founder of an empowerment self-defense organization ZA SEBA that provides safety education focused on women, kids and families. A small, one-person project fueled by her feeling of “I need every woman to know what this feels like”, turned into a professional NGO with a strong team.

Bianka used her experience as a graphic designer to differentiate her brand from all self-defense programs on the market that seemed very uninviting for women and anyone who is not eager to physically fight (at least not right away).

In addition to her experience in teaching ESD and branding/design, she kept gaining UI and UX experience while working on various corporate projects that she uses in all her work.

Bianka also likes to train Hybrid Krav Maga, boxing, lifting weights and cuddling with her cats.



Krista Hanley, ESDP – Credentialing Program Manager

Denver, CO, USA

Credentialing Exam and Exam Development
Accreditation Program Oversight and
Development
ESD Credentialing Committee/ IAESDP Liaison

Through public speaking, writing, and teaching empowerment self-defense Krista Hanley has spent over 15 years equipping people with tools to reclaim their voice and power, embrace their creativity, and learn safety and resilience skills.

As a co-owner of the organization We Are Safer Together, Krista brings trauma-informed and empowering strategies to programming focused on community safety, self-defense, and creative expression for trauma recovery. Her role as the Credentialing Program Manager with the International Association of ESD Professionals leverages her experience with program and curriculum development, instructor training, adaptive and inclusive facilitation, and trauma-informed practices.

Krista has won multiple writing awards, and her essays have been featured in publications such as Huffington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Memoir Magazine. She is the author of the forthcoming memoir about surviving the Columbine High School shooting.

In her free time, she paints, reads fantasy and mystery books, and takes pictures of her adorable cat Atticus. Also, Krista makes the world's best chocolate chip cookies.



IN 2025, WE WELCOMED:

Lauren Lopp, ESDP – Communications

Nashville, TN, USA

Hi, I'm Lauren! After being brought on as press manager for The Strong Side, I am currently serving in the Communications Department for the International Association of ESD Professionals as Brand Voice Guardian—shaping our voice and messaging across press and social media platforms—and as project manager, where my love of systematizing, organizing, and general overarching need to control things really shines. Some of the realms of ESD that I'm most passionate about are embodiment and emotional regulation, boys and men's work, and The Strong Side

I am a storyteller at heart (you may have seen some of the columns I've written over on our website and I also have a travel blog on the side, Wilder and Wonder)

In addition to writing and traveling, I love reading, art journaling, gardening, cooking, Pilates, oracle cards, and martial arts. Kali is my first love, but Jeet Kune Do and Muay Thai are also close seconds (elbows and knees, baby!)

My work for the International Association of ESD Professionals brings together my love for storytelling, system organization, project management, personal empowerment and sovereignty, international travel, and working with a killer team of women I deeply admire all into one place.



What Empowerment Self Defense means to me:

"Choice—having it and exercising it, freedom, and personal sovereignty—being able to move through the world and my life the way I want to."

DOVI DOPO KOLEKTIV — SOCIAL MEDIA AGENCY

Júlia Gavačová

Trenčín, Slovakia

Hello, I'm Joe. It's just a nickname, but after a while with me, you realise it simply fits my personality - outgoing, happy (almost) all the time, and overly excited about the most unexciting trivia, which I will always share with you. Also, almost constantly in a company of some animal.

I am the co-owner of a small social media agency, DOVI DOPO, together with my bestie Naty. My main focus is art direction, and together with Naty, we work on brand communication strategies and creative solutions for our clients.

I live with my boyfriend Eric, our orange cat Leo, and our bearded dragon Stephen. It's a male-dominated household, but I'm handling it quite well.



What Empowerment Self Defense means to me:

ESD means safety to me. I had the opportunity to experience several lessons - both personally and together with my former students. Sadly, both me and some of my students had to use these techniques in real life, but that makes me even more grateful for this experience and more motivated to help spread the word.



Natália Bystrická

Trenčín, Slovakia

Hello, I'm Natalia, and I co-own a small social media agency with my creative bestie, Joe. I'm the project management freak in our duo, and even though my primary focus is content creation, you can count on me to keep everything organized. I love creating short form videos, and that's my main focus for the brands I work with.

I live with my husband, Michal, who tolerates my obsessive compulsion to declutter anything at home that doesn't feel necessary to keep (thankfully, he's survived it so far).

What Empowerment Self Defense means to me:

ESD helped me realize that self defense is about so much more than just kicking a man in the balls when needed. I'm really glad organizations teaching ESD exist, they're doing such important work.



WHO IS BEHIND THE IAESDP

In 2024, IAESDP went through a phase of restructuring and re-evaluation, culminating in the hiring of a new team to ensure the association's prosperous future. The new team includes a new Project Manager, Credentialing lead, and Communications Advisor.

Additionally, the Board of Directors was expanded with international industry professionals to provide the best guidance for IAESDP's path forward.

Board of Directors



Michele Elefante
Board Chair



Sally Van Wright
Board Secretary



Sarit Arbel
Development Coordinator



Aparna Rajawat
India & S.E. Asia



Adi Wimmer
Israel/ Middle East



Gentiana Susaj
Albania/ Europe



JB Ramos
Canada



Michael Peñafiel
Padded Instructors



Pamela Mussi Valdez
Brazil



Warren Lewis
Israel/Technology



Antonella Spatola
Australia/New Zealand

The Credentialing
Committee



Poy de Lara
UDRiVe Group
Philippines



Kim Rivers
Representing ESD
Europe



James Cat
Fitzgerald
Representing ASSERT
Empowerment



Jes McAlear



Erjola Shaka
ESDA, ESDP



**Why Industry
Associations**



Empowerment Self Defense has reached a critical juncture. What began as a niche practice has grown into a sought-after profession—but growth alone doesn't guarantee sustainability. As demand increases and visibility expands, the field faces a choice: organize intentionally or risk fragmentation.

The International Association of ESD Professionals was founded to ensure that our field's growth strengthens rather than dilutes our collective impact. Industries don't create associations because

The Inflection Point

it's trendy. They create them when informal networks can no longer handle the demands of a maturing field. For ESD, that moment has arrived.

The signs are clear: Training quality varies widely across the field. Public demand is outpacing our ability to self-regulate. Funders, insurers, governments, and employers are asking a question we haven't been able to answer collectively: Who speaks for this field? Without shared standards, even high-quality providers face reputational risk from the gaps in our profession.

What once felt like independence now functions as a liability. The absence of a central, member-driven body leaves us vulnerable—to misunderstanding, to external regulation imposed without our input, and to a future we don't get to shape.



What Associations Do

An industry association accomplishes what no single organization can achieve alone. It sets and stewards shared standards without monopolizing methodology. It represents the profession to policymakers, partners, and the public. It creates neutral infrastructure for credentialing, ethics, data collection, and accountability.

Well-functioning associations don't control industries. They stabilize them.

By raising the floor of professional practice without capping innovation, associations make it easier for quality work to be recognized and rewarded. They create continuity across regions, training approaches, and generations of practitioners. They allow fields to engage proactively with research, policy, and funding—rather than simply reacting after decisions have been made.

In short, associations transform a collection of providers into a profession.

WHAT THE ASSOCIATION PROVIDES

For Practitioners

A recognized professional home that signals legitimacy beyond individual brands. Clear pathways for development, credentialing, and peer accountability. Collective visibility that elevates the entire field, not just the loudest voices.



For Organizations & Employers

A reliable signal of quality when hiring or contracting. Reduced risk through shared ethical frameworks. A single point of engagement for partnerships, research, and large-scale initiatives.

For the Public & Allied Sectors

Clarity in a crowded landscape. Confidence that expertise claims are backed by enforceable standards. A mechanism for transparency, improvement, and accountability.



THE PATH FORWARD

“ *Industries without associations tend to fragment.
Industries with strong associations tend to mature.*

Right now, Empowerment Self Defense stands at a crossroads. We're increasingly visible, increasingly sought after, and increasingly scrutinized. The IAESDP exists to ensure this attention translates into sustainable growth rather than dilution of quality.

Membership isn't about permission or control. It's about collective stewardship—investing in an industry that defines itself rather than being defined by outsiders, in standards that protect practitioners and participants alike, in a professional future where ESD is recognized, respected, and sustainable.

*Industries that want to endure organize.
Industries that want to lead do it early.*

“

THE ASSOCIATION ADVANTAGE



With a Professional Association:

Shared standards reduce confusion and reputational harm

External partners know where to turn

Professionals gain collective leverage and visibility

Growth is guided rather than chaotic



Without One:

Anyone can claim expertise; the public can't tell the difference

Quality providers are indistinguishable from inadequate ones

The field remains reactive, fragmented, and vulnerable

Long-term credibility erodes even as participation grows

THE ASSOCIATION ADVANTAGE

What No Single Organization Can Do Alone:

Set shared standards across methodologies

Represent the profession externally

Create neutral credentialing infrastructure

Build long-term field credibility

Enable proactive engagement with policy and research

About the IAESDP



WHAT WE DO: SERVICES THAT STRENGTHEN THE FIELD

The International Association of ESD Professionals exists to do more than convene—we actively support, advance, and protect the practitioners who make this work possible. Our portfolio of services combines professional development, community-building, and advocacy to ensure ESD professionals can thrive while creating lasting change.

Advocacy: Amplifying Our Collective Voice

We don't wait for others to recognize the value of Empowerment Self-Defense. We make the case ourselves.

The IAESDP advocates for policies that integrate ESD into educational and community programs, ensuring our industry's voice shapes violence prevention strategies rather than reacting to them. We push for the adoption of evidence-based ESD curriculums, raise public awareness about the transformative power of this work, and fight for fair compensation that reflects the expertise and impact ESD professionals bring to their communities.

Professional Development: Building Excellence

Quality ESD instruction doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing learning, clear standards, and pathways for growth.

We provide the infrastructure professionals need to expand their impact. Credentialing programs establish recognized benchmarks for

expertise. Continuing education keeps instructors at the forefront of best practices. Leadership training equips members to scale their work, mentor others, and elevate program quality across the field.

These aren't just credentials—they're investments in a profession that can sustain itself and its practitioners for the long term.

Community & Collaboration: Connecting the Field

ESD professionals shouldn't work in isolation. The challenges we face—and the innovations we create—are best addressed together.

Our online platforms connect instructors, trainers, and allied organizations across the globe, fostering the exchange of ideas and building partnerships that amplify reach and impact. In the coming years, these connections will extend to regional chapters and international events, creating opportunities for practitioners to learn from one another, collaborate on research, and coordinate advocacy efforts.

Innovation happens at the intersections. We create those intersections intentionally.

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Resources & Standards: Supporting Quality Work

Consistency matters. Participants deserve to know that ESD instruction meets rigorous standards, no matter where or with whom they train.

Members gain access to research libraries, operational toolkits, and standardized safety guidelines—all designed to support high-quality, evidence-informed instruction. Our Code of Ethics and accountability measures reinforce professional standards, building trust within the field and with the public we serve.

These resources don't dictate methodology. They ensure that diverse approaches to ESD share a common commitment to excellence, safety, and integrity.

Equity & Security: Protecting Our People

Fair pay isn't a luxury. Neither is support when professionals face disputes or challenges that threaten their ability to work.

We advocate for compensation structures that reflect the skill and expertise ESD work requires. We offer dispute resolution services when conflicts arise. We provide assistance programs for members navigating professional or personal hardships.

ESD professionals dedicate themselves to empowering others. We believe they deserve systems that protect and empower them in return.

Building a Sustainable Profession

This comprehensive framework—advocacy, development, community, resources, and protection—empowers ESD professionals to lead, collaborate, and innovate. Together, we're not just strengthening individual practices. We're building a profession capable of creating safer, more resilient communities across the globe.

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

Advocacy

- Policy integration for ESD programs
- Public awareness campaigns
- Fair pay standards

Professional Development

- Credentialing and Accreditation programs
- Continuing education
- Leadership training

Community Collaboration

- Global networking platforms
- Regional chapters (coming soon)
- International events (in development)

Resources & Standards

- Research libraries
- Operational toolkits
- Safety guidelines
- Code of Ethics

Equity & Security

- Fair compensation advocacy
- Dispute resolution
- Member assistance programs

Why It Matters

Members benefit from access to tools, standards, and support that would be impossible to build alone. Organizations gain reliable signals of quality. The public receives consistent, ethical, evidence-based instruction. The field moves from fragmentation to professionalization.



WHAT WE DO/ DO NOT DO

What We Do

1. Support all ESD Professionals, independent of certification, methodology, or ESD Training program.
2. We bring the entire ESD Community together through networking, mentorship, and continuing education across all ESD Programs.
3. We provide tailored Business Support, Business Services, and Business Classes to the ESD Community.
4. We provide services to both Association Members and Non-Members within the ESD Community.
5. We work alongside the ESD Credentialing Committee to set and evaluate international credentialing and accreditation industry standards across all ESD Certificate Programs.



What We Do Not Do

1. Control or dictate what ESD Programs or Instructors teach or how they teach it.
2. Provide ESD Instructor Certification.
3. Share your Intellectual Property.
4. Unlike franchise models, the IAESDP does not require members to use association branding, methodologies, or standardized curricula — your program remains yours.



*We do not promote one specific program.
We promote ESD Methodology.*

THE SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM

Five Pillars of Member Support:



Voice

Industry advocacy & policy influence



Growth

Credentials, education & leadership development



Connection

Global networks & collaborative platforms



Excellence

Standards, research & operational resources



Protection

Fair pay, dispute resolution & assistance

THE SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM

We support you as you empower the world



Advocacy



THE CHANGING SD MARKET 2026

The way individuals and communities understand and seek personal safety is evolving rapidly. Rising global insecurity—shaped by political instability, economic pressures, social polarization, and uneven access to safe public spaces—has heightened awareness of personal safety needs across gender, minority, and socio-economic groups. Safety is no longer assumed; it is learned, practiced, and nurtured. When people feel unsafe, their agency, confidence, and mental well-being are affected, reinforcing the importance of education that enhances both physical and psychological resilience.

The relevancy and recognition for the need for self-defense and safety education is on the rise.

Why People Seek Safety Education

People are not just asking how to prepare for danger and life-threatening crises; they want to live everyday life better—with greater confidence, more assertiveness, and clear boundaries. They want to live boldly and without fear in a world that is constantly changing.

We can see this in student trends across safety, self-defense, and related training programs worldwide. People are seeking knowledge that integrates:

- Proactive Prevention and De-escalation
- Verbal and non-physical boundary setting
- Choiceful action
- The confidence to remain agile and adaptable in the real world

Empowerment Self Defense (ESD) reflects these broader needs by centering prevention, choice, inclusivity, and holistic agency. This marks a clear departure from traditional models that focus narrowly on physical techniques without social application.

“We prepare people for life, not just danger, not just threat.”

By the Numbers

The global self-defense market (encompassing products, training, digital tools, and institutional programs) is expanding steadily, driven by rising personal safety concerns, increased awareness of prevention-focused education, and growing demand from both individuals and institutions.

Global Market Snapshot

Before 2025, the global market size categorized Self Defense products and training together. The combined Market Size estimates are:

2023: ~US\$2.84B

2024: ~US\$5.84B

2025 is the first year the Market made a clear distinction between Self Defense products and Self Defense Services.

If combined in 2025, ~US\$7.7B

Professional Self-Defense & Safety Training

This category includes structured self-defense education, safety training programs, and professional instruction delivered to individuals, workplaces, schools, sports organizations, and community groups.

- Estimated global market size: ~USD 4.1 billion by 2026
- Projected growth to: ~USD 6.9 billion by 2033
- Estimated growth rate: ~8.2 % CAGR

Self-Defense Products

This segment includes non-lethal personal safety tools such as alarms, deterrent sprays, and wearable safety devices. Growth is strongest in regions experiencing rapid urbanization, social unrest, and increased public awareness of personal safety.

- Estimated global market value: ~USD 3.6 billion (2025)
- Projected market value: ~USD 4.4 billion by 2030
- Estimated growth rate: ~6.5 % CAGR

What This Means Over Time

1-Year Outlook (2025–2026):

Continued growth as personal safety remains a global priority, with increased participation in both individual and institutional training programs.

3-Year Outlook (2027–2029):

Expansion driven by hybrid delivery models (in-person + digital), workplace and organizational adoption, and growing demand for prevention-focused education.

5-Year Outlook (2030–2033):

A mature, diversified global market with combined self-defense product and professional education revenues reaching the low-to-mid-teens of billions (USD), alongside increased expectations for professional standards, accountability, and impact.

A Market in Transition

These numbers reflect more than economic growth. They signal a global shift in how people understand safety. Demand is moving away from reactive, technique-only models and toward education that emphasizes prevention, agency, mental well-being, and real-world applicability.

As the market grows, so do expectations. Individuals, organizations, and funders are increasingly prioritizing programs that are ethical, inclusive, evidence-informed, and delivered by trained, credentialed professionals. This evolution underscores the importance of leadership, standards, and accountability in shaping the future of the self-defense and safety education field.

As the market grows, so do expectations. Individuals, organizations, and funders are increasingly prioritizing programs that are ethical, inclusive, evidence-informed, and delivered by trained, credentialed professionals. This evolution underscores the importance of leadership, standards, and accountability in shaping the future of the self-defense and safety education field.

This creates opportunities for credentialed providers, long-term partnerships with employers and community organizations, and innovation in education delivery. It also underscores the value of IAESDP's leadership in standards, professional development, and ethical practice—preparing the field for a future where safety education is essential, respected, and accessible.

What This Growth Represents

This economic momentum reflects more than consumer spending. It represents a cultural shift in how people relate to personal safety. Communities increasingly value:

- Prevention and agency over fear-based reactions
- Inclusive, trauma-informed education over one-size-fits-all solutions
- Lifelong learning and confidence building over sporadic skill acquisition

By centering the full human experience—mental, emotional, and physical—ESD and empowerment-focused training are shaping expectations for what safety education can and should be.

Industry Implications

As the market grows, expectations are rising. Participants and institutional partners increasingly seek programs that are:

- Evidence-informed and professionally accountable
- Inclusive of diverse bodies, identities, and lived experiences
- Grounded in prevention, boundary setting, and contextual understanding
- Capable of demonstrating real impact through outcomes and practice

Credentialing and Accreditation



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS: CREDENTIALING, ACCREDITATION & GOVERNANCE

Professional recognition transforms a field. It creates clarity where confusion once existed, accountability where standards were informal, and pathways for growth where practitioners previously navigated alone. In 2025, the IAESDP built the infrastructure to make professional recognition real—through credentialing that evaluates individual competence, accreditation that assesses organizational quality, and governance structures that ensure both processes remain rigorous, fair, and responsive to the field's evolution.

This section details how we established these systems, who oversees them, and what they've accomplished in their first full year of operation.

The ESD Credentialing Committee: Independent Oversight

The Empowerment Self Defense Credentialing Committee (ECC) serves as the independent decision-making body for all credentialing and accreditation programs within the IAESDP. Organized and led separately from the Association's operational staff, the ECC includes ESD professionals, related industry experts, and public representatives—ensuring decisions reflect both practitioner expertise and public accountability.

*People get certified and
credentialed. Programs get
accredited.*



The ECC's mandate is clear: determine standard practices, establish minimum curriculum requirements, and create conflict resolution pathways for the ESD industry. Their work ensures that those who educate the public and train new instructors follow rigorous, fair, and ethical processes aligned with a recognized universal standard.

This isn't governance for governance's sake. It's a commitment to integrity—ensuring credentialing and accreditation decisions are made by a diverse, qualified body rather than concentrated in the hands of any single organization or interest group.

Serving on the ECC: Expectations and Accountability

Committee membership carries real responsibility. ECC members review materials in a timely and professional manner, attend scheduled meetings, and contribute to fair and consistent decision-making. They adhere to the IAESDP ethics policy throughout their term(s), maintaining the same standards they uphold for credentialed professionals.

Participation requirements are concrete: Members must attend at least 75% of scheduled meetings annually and respond to all required polls, emails, forms, and document reviews. These aren't arbitrary benchmarks—they ensure the committee can function effectively and make decisions with appropriate input and quorum. Failure to meet participation standards may result in removal, protecting the committee's ability to serve the field reliably.

The ECC's independence and accountability reflect a broader principle: the systems that govern professional standards must themselves be held to professional standards.

ECC Composition

Who Serves:

- ESD Professionals with field experience
- Related industry experts
- Public representatives

Why It Matters:

Independent governance ensures decisions balance practitioner knowledge, industry expertise, and public accountability—not the interests of any single organization.

ECC Responsibilities

Policy Decisions:

- Standard practices for credentialing and accreditation
- Minimum curriculum requirements
- Conflict resolution pathways

Commitment:

Ensuring rigorous, fair, and ethical processes that align with universal standards for ESD education and training.

Participation Standards

Required:

- Attend 75% of annual meetings minimum
- Respond to all required communications
- Review materials professionally and on schedule
- Adhere to IAESDP ethics policy

Accountability:

Failure to meet standards may result in removal to protect committee effectiveness.

CREDENTIALING & ACCREDITATION: SETTING THE STANDARD

Professional recognition shouldn't be arbitrary. It should reflect competence, commitment, and adherence to shared standards. In 2025, the IAESDP transformed credentialing from concept to reality—and the field responded.

The Numbers Tell the Story

We credentialed 26 new instructors in 2025—more than the total number credentialed in the previous three years combined. Seventeen earned the ESD Professional (ESDP) credential. Nine achieved ESD Associate (ESDA) status, a new pathway designed specifically for newly trained instructors.

This wasn't incremental growth. It was a signal that the field is ready for professional standards.

Six exam sessions ran throughout the year, supported by a move to Mercer | Mettl—a professional, user-friendly platform that made the credentialing process more accessible without compromising rigor. A new tiered pricing structure, including financial assistance and scholarships, removed barriers for qualified applicants. The average exam fee was USD\$50, and the program grossed over USD\$1,300 while maintaining affordability.

Credentials are now available in three languages—English, Spanish, and Portuguese—reflecting the global nature of this work.

Building Infrastructure That Lasts

Credentialing isn't just about exams. It's about creating a system that can evolve, scale, and maintain integrity over time.

In 2025, we completed documentation of our credential creation process under ISO standards, formalizing compliance with international credentialing and accrediting bodies. We designed and launched a Continuing Education (Credential Renewal) Program, which officially went live in early 2026, ensuring that credentialed professionals stay current as the field advances.

The inaugural ESD Credentialing Committee was established to oversee both credential and accreditation programs. Committee members—representing diverse geographic regions, ESD methodologies, trauma-informed care approaches, and martial arts backgrounds—established founding policies and procedures, and voted on inaugural leadership roles.

This isn't a small team making decisions for everyone. It's a globally representative body stewarding standards collaboratively.

Raising Awareness

Standards only work if people know they exist. Throughout 2025, we delivered four "About Credentialing" presentations: three during ESD Europe virtual seminars and one in-person at the ESD Europe Advanced Seminar in Albania. These talks introduced practitioners to the credentialing process, answered questions, and demystified what professional recognition looks like in practice.

The result? Interest in credentialing increased measurably, and the pipeline of qualified applicants grew.

Accreditation: The Next Frontier

Credentialing recognizes individual professionals. Accreditation evaluates programs and training organizations—ensuring that the entities preparing ESD instructors meet rigorous, standardized criteria.

In 2025, we designed the full Accreditation Program, applying ISO and NCCA (National Commission for Certifying Agencies) standards in both development and evaluation. Intent-to-apply and full application processes are now live, and we currently have five applicants preparing to move through the program in early 2026.

Accreditation will create transparency and accountability at the organizational level, giving funders, employers, and the public a reliable way to assess training quality before instructors ever enter the field.

What This Means

Credentialing and accreditation aren't about gatekeeping. They're about creating pathways for recognition, accountability, and continuous improvement. They ensure that when someone says they're a credentialed ESD professional, it means something concrete and verifiable.

In 2025, we built the foundation. In 2026, we scale.

Equity & Security



- 26 new credentialed instructors
- 6 exam sessions
- 3 languages offered
- 4 informational talks delivered
- \$50 average exam cost
- 130% increase over previous three years combined

Making It Accessible

New in 2025:

- Tiered pricing structure
- Financial assistance options
- Scholarship opportunities
- Professional exam software (Mercer | Mettl)
- Multilingual access (English, Spanish, Portuguese)

Result: Significant increase in qualified applicants



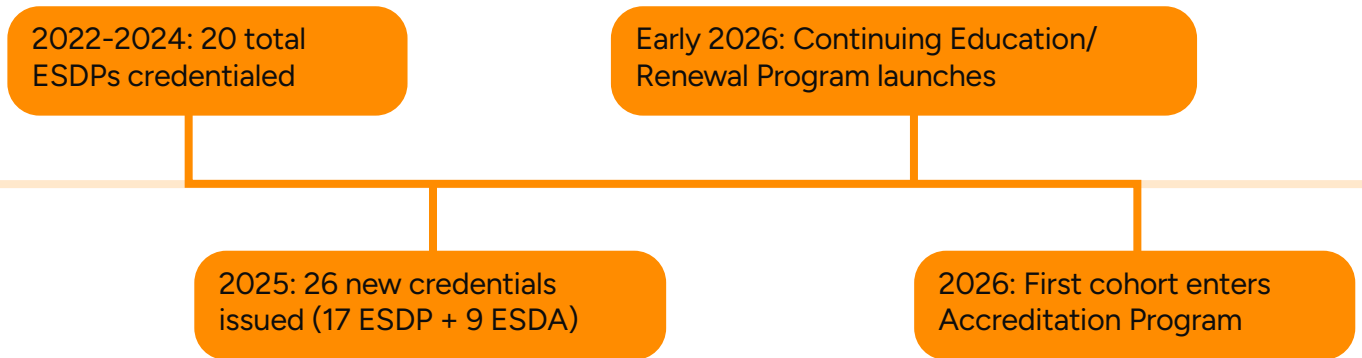
Two Pathways, One Standard

ESDP (ESD Professional)
For experienced instructors demonstrating advanced competence and field knowledge

ESDA (ESD Associate)
For newly trained instructors beginning their professional journey

Both credentials require examination and adherence to the IAESDP Code of Ethics

The Credentialing Timeline



What's Next - Accreditation

Now Live:

Intent to apply process

Full application system

ISO/NCCA-compliant evaluation standards



In Progress:

5 organizations preparing applications for early 2026 review

Both credentials require examination and adherence to the IAESDP Code of Ethics

Accomplishments



2025 Accomplishments Timeline

JANUARY

- **Laying the Infrastructure**
 - Began full program development of The Strong Side™, positioning it as IAESDP's flagship job-creation and market-growth engine for the ESD industry.
 - Initiated development of IAESDP's first Public Annual Report, formalizing a transparent, professional communications standard aligned with industry associations.
 - Held an ESD Professional Credentialing Exam for incoming IAESDP Board Members.
 - Expanded the IAESDP Staff, adding Bianka Urbanovska in the Program Manager role and Claude Jonksman in the Communications Manager role.

FEBRUARY

- **Sector Leadership**
 - Published a USAID funding response and sector guidance, offering sponsored memberships and credential seats to impacted practitioners—demonstrating leadership during global funding instability.
 - Drafted the IAESDP Employee Handbook framework, establishing scalable people-ops and onboarding infrastructure.
 - Published the 2024 Annual Report.
 - Held 1st ECC Committee Meeting, welcoming the founding Committee Members.
 - Invited Certificate Programs to partner with The Strong Side™.

MARCH

- **Credentialing, Partnerships, & Knowledge Access**
 - Held the 1st ESD Public Professional Credentialing Exam of 2025, continuing the transition from training-only pathways to industry-recognized credentials.
 - Transitioned the Credentialing exam to the Mercer | Mettl platform, ensuring ease of use and access for all ESD Community Members globally.

APRIL

- Collaborated with ESD Albania and ESD Europe to support spring education programs, including outreach systems and sponsorship targeting.
- Finalized the El Halev Library Partnership, bringing trauma-informed teaching tools and curricula to The Idea Bridge at no cost to ESD instructors.
- Launched The Strong Side™ website.

● Policy, Advocacy, & Global Positioning

- Applied for United Nations Consultative Status (process ongoing), formalizing IAESDP's role in global policy dialogue.
- Issued a public response to a UN Women rights report under the #FightForward banner.
- Advanced core governance, IP protection, compliance, and annual review policies for board consideration—strengthening long-term risk management.
- Updated and compiled the 2025 Credentialing Handbook.

MAY

● Education Pipeline Expansion

- Held the 2nd ESD Public Professional Credentialing Exam of 2025.
- Built and deployed the ESD Virtual Seminar platform, ensuring a stable conversion pipeline from learning to credentialing.
- Co-hosted the 1st Annual Advanced ESD Learning Webinar with ESD Albania and ESD Europe.
- Began preparations for The Strong Side™ launch in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- Mailed Commemorative Credential Certificates to the original exam committee members and test takers.

JUNE

● Research & Evidence Base

- Announced a formal research collaboration with Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health (SEE Change Initiative), strengthening ESD's evidence base and future member research pathways.
- Developed the ESD Associates Credential Exam and process.

JULY

- Developed International Standards & Regulations for ESD Professionals, meeting both ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and NCCA (National Commission for Certifying Agencies) requirements.

● Industry Standards & Program Launch

- Published the International Standards & Regulations for ESD Professionals, a major professionalization milestone for the field.
- Officially launched The Strong Side™ in São Paulo, Brazil, establishing the first live pilot market with impact-tracking and partner deployment.
- Held 1st ESD Associates Credential Beta Exam.
- Launch of Accreditation Program via publishing of “Intent to Apply” application.

AUGUST

● Program Expansion

- Launched The Strong Side™ in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, expanding sponsor outreach and local provider partnerships.
- Co-hosted the 2nd Advanced ESD Learning Webinar with ESD Albania and ESD Europe.
- Held the 3rd ESD Public Professional Credentialing Exam of 2025.
- Launched Paid Credentialing Exam Grader Program.
- Developed ESD Associate Credentialing Exam in Spanish and Portuguese.

SEPTEMBER

● International Growth & Access

- Launched The Strong Side™ in Barcelona, Spain and London, UK, marking the program’s first European activations.
- Brought the ESD Associate Credential online in three languages, significantly expanding global access.
- Initiated outreach to San Diego FC and engaged with the Head of Human Rights & Anti-Discrimination at FIFA.
- Completed new IAESDP Branding prototype and design and began preparation for launch.
- Relunched all Social Media channel branding.

OCTOBER

- **Advanced Training & Credentialing Throughput**
 - Co-hosted an in-person Advanced ESD Seminar in Albania with ESD Albania and ESD Europe.
 - Held the 4th ESD Public Professional Credentialing Exam of 2025, the first to include both ESDP and ESDA Credentialing.
 - Achieved 28 credentialing exams scheduled in 2025 (18 ESDP / 10 ESDA), including 6 sign-ups from the Albania seminar—clear proof of pipeline strength.
 - Developed the Continuing Education Credential Renewal requirements.
 - Developed an ESD Job & Program Placement Service for Credentialed and Certified IAESDP Members.

NOVEMBER

- **Visibility & Strategic Relationships**
 - Advanced partnership discussions with Underdog Ventures to support The Strong Side's growth and visibility within the Pro Sports Industry.
 - Executed 16 Days of Activism content and outreach to sustain public awareness and alignment with global anti-violence efforts.
 - Made contact with the Spanish Ministry of Equity in regards to The Strong Side™ Program and potential partnership.
 - Launched a brand new Member Portal—www.ESDProMembers.com—offering Member's access to all association services.

DECEMBER

- **Traction & Validation**
 - Converted Brentford FC from exploratory interest to active engagement following formal pitch discussions—tangible validation of The Strong Side™ model and IAESDP's international credibility.
 - Co-hosted the 3rd Advanced ESD Learning Webinar with ESD Albania and ESD Europe.
 - Started to receive Accreditation Applications from established ESD Certificate Programs.
 - Completed re-design of association website and began preparations for launch.

Where "Fight bæk!" meets "Pay-it Forward!"



#FightForward is the ESD industry's first unified public awareness campaign — a shared message designed to elevate our entire field, not just any single organization or program.

The concept is simple: self-defense is not about bracing for the worst. It is about building the confidence, agency, and skills to move through life on your own terms. #FightForward captures that shift in a single phrase — from reactive to proactive, from fear-based to future-facing — and gives the global ESD community a common language to communicate it.

But a message only works if people hear it — and, just as importantly, if they understand it. That is why #FightForward is built as a campaign, not just a philosophy, and why it introduces a deliberate shift in how we talk

Speaking the Public's Language

Within our community, "Empowerment Self Defense" carries deep meaning. It signals methodology, values, and a shared professional identity. But outside our community, the term often lands without context. Most people do not know what ESD stands for, how it differs from traditional self-defense, or why it matters. If the public cannot immediately grasp what we offer, they cannot seek it out, fund it, or advocate for it.

#FightForward addresses this by introducing public-facing language that communicates our value in terms people already understand and care about: Violence Prevention. Safety Skills and Education. The Human Right to Safety and Security.

These are not replacements for ESD — they are translations. Within our industry, we will continue to use the language and frameworks that define our professional practice. But when we speak to the public, to policymakers, to media, to sponsors, and to potential students, #FightForward leads with language that connects immediately to lived experience and recognized priorities. Violence prevention is a public health conversation already underway. Human safety skills describe what people actually learn. The human right to safety and security anchors our work in a framework that governments, institutions, and international bodies already recognize.

This is not about diluting what we do. It is about making sure the people who need us most can find us — and that the institutions positioned to fund and support this work can see exactly where ESD fits.

A Campaign Built for the Entire Community

In 2026, the IAESDP will roll out a full suite of customizable marketing assets available to every ESD professional and organization in our community. These will include social media kits with ready-to-post graphics and captions, messaging guides with approved language and talking points built around the new public-facing framework, customizable templates for flyers, presentations, and email campaigns, co-branded materials that pair #FightForward with your own program's identity, and a digital brand toolkit with logos, color palettes, and usage guidelines — all designed so that practitioners can adapt #FightForward to their local markets, audiences, and languages while maintaining a consistent, professional message worldwide.

The strategy behind this is intentional. The IAESDP brings marketing expertise, campaign infrastructure, and institutional credibility. Our community members bring reach, relationships, and the trust they have built in their own regions.

When we combine those strengths, we stop competing for attention individually and start commanding it collectively.

A unified messaging front does something no solo effort can: it makes our field visible at scale. When prospective students, institutional partners, funders, and policymakers encounter the same professional, evidence-informed message across cities, countries, and continents — framed in language they already recognize — the field stops looking fragmented and starts looking like exactly what

it is: a global profession with shared standards and shared purpose.

#FightForward is how we tell that story together.

Will you Fight Forward with us?

#FightForward belongs to the entire ESD community. Later this year, we will release the full campaign toolkit — social media kits, messaging guides, co-branded templates, and more — built around a public-facing message of Violence Prevention, Human Safety Skills, and the Human Right to Safety and Security. Same campaign. Your brand. One united industry.

Let's Fight Forward, together.





THE STRONG SIDE™

INSPIRING FANS TO
EXPERIENCE THE BEAUTIFUL GAME
BOLDLY AND WITH
CONFIDENCE

What Is The Strong Side?

The Strong Side is a global violence prevention initiative bringing ESD to the arena of sports and fan safety, starting with football — so that every football fan, player, staff member, journalist, security personnel, and community member feels safe, confident, empowered, and included — on and off the pitch.

This is the International Association of ESD Professionals' flagship, global impact engine— designed to bring violence prevention, anti-discrimination, and human safety skills into some of the most influential public spaces in the world: professional sports and the communities that surround them.

At its core, The Strong Side uses Empowerment Self Defense (ESD) as its evidence-based methodology, while delivering training through a broader, accessible framework that includes violence prevention, de-escalation skills, healthy rivalries, and safety and empowerment education. The result is a hybrid, plug-and-play model that combines in-person training, digital tools, research, and public engagement to create measurable cultural change at scale.

The program is intentionally designed to do three things at once:

- Generate real-world safety outcomes for fans, athletes, staff, and communities
- Create economically sustainable opportunities for credentialed ESD professionals
- Position IAESDP as the global backbone for quality, ethics, and coordination in the ESD field

In short: The Strong Side moves ESD from the margins to the mainstream—without diluting its principles or its power.

Why we need it?

Gameday Violence isn't limited to the stadium, pub, or watch party. When fans carry home misplaced passion and fervor to their intimate partners and family members, gameday violence often becomes domestic violence and sexual assault.

The increase in match day violence is widely recognized yet still lacks a sustainable solution capable of driving meaningful cultural change.

That's where The Strong Side comes in.

Because everyone deserves to feel safe — in the stands, in their communities, and in their homes.

TOP 10 MOST IMPACTFUL GLOBAL STATISTICS ON GAMEDAY VIOLENCE

NFL upset losses → 10% spike in domestic violence

- When an NFL team unexpectedly loses, police-reported IPV increases by about 10%

Rivalry NFL upset losses → 20% spike

- If that unexpected loss is to a rival, domestic violence jumps to 20%

England World Cup losses → 38% rise in domestic abuse

- On days the England national football team loses in the World Cup, domestic abuse incidents rise by 38%

England wins/draws → 26% increase

- Even when England wins or draws, domestic abuse rises 26% compared to non-match days

Alcohol-related DV in England after wins → 47% spike

- In the West Midlands, alcohol-related domestic violence increases by 47% on days England wins

Brazil home soccer matches → 25–26% rise in injuries to women

- On home match days in Brazil's national league, reports of bodily injury to women increase 25–26%

Colombia World Cup match days → 43% rise in violence against women

- During the 2014 World Cup, VAW medical cases jumped 43% on Colombia match days; IPV rose 39%

NCAA Division I college football home games → 41% rise in rape reports

- On home game Saturdays, reported rapes of women aged 17–24 increase by 41%

Australian State of Origin rugby nights → 40% increase in domestic assaults

- In New South Wales, domestic assault incidents rise by about 40% during State of Origin matches

Scottish "Old Firm" rivalry → 36% rise in domestic violence

- Celtic vs. Rangers rivalry matches lead to a 36% increase in domestic violence reports

Our goal

“We don’t just teach Violence Prevention; we build a safety net for the whole community.”

Our goal is a sustainable solution capable of challenging and dismantling the structures that enable violence while building lasting systems of safety and respect for all. Resulting in meaningful cultural change that protects and empowers fans, players, staff, women, LGBTQ+ and local communities, and ends gameday violence.

How it works

Grounded in agency, equality, and solidarity, The Strong Side advances principles centered on self-knowledge and collective defense that empowers players, staff, fans, and community members to recognize, prevent, and interrupt violence while fostering safety and belonging in sport.



Program Players

- IAESDP Global Logistics
- Local ESD providers and Street Teams
- Football clubs, stadium security, and fans
- Local communities
- Johns Hopkins University
- Businesses and corporate sponsors

Program Pillars

- Gameday safety training and events for female-identifying fans + families
- Men’s and boys’ programming
- Workplace safety workshops for athletes, coaches, staff, security personnel, and journalists
- Transforming stadium security into visible safety resources
- Free community safety trainings



HOW THE STRONG SIDE BENEFITS THE ESD INDUSTRY

What does this mean for the ESD industry?

Sustainable revenue creation independent of private or public funding

- Full time job creation with a livable salary and benefits.
- A minimum of 5 full-time jobs created with each team signed.

Increased global recognition

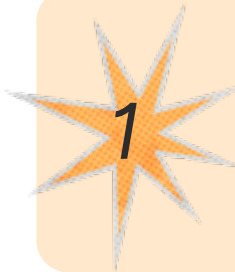
- Promote ESD as the solution to the severity and prevalence of the issue.
- Raise awareness of importance of seeking ESD instructors over non ESD instructors.
- Professionals get more business as awareness of ESD grows .

Growth in Association Membership and Credentialed ESD Instructors/

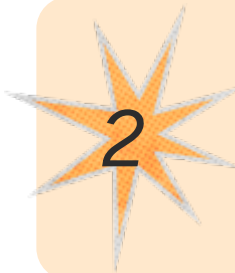
- Association gets more members and credentialed professionals.
- Motivate professionals to train and become credentialed in ESD.

For decades, the ESD field has delivered profound impact—often without visibility, funding parity, or coordinated infrastructure. The Strong Side directly addresses that gap.

The Strong Side does not extract value from the ESD community. It reinvests it—structurally, financially, and reputationally.



First, it elevates ESD as a legitimate violence-prevention discipline, not a niche intervention. By embedding Empowerment Self Defense inside large-scale, public-facing initiatives—stadiums, leagues, sponsors, media—the program positions ESD alongside public health, workplace safety, and community violence-prevention efforts where it belongs.



Second, it creates new, paid pathways for ESD professionals that extend far beyond traditional class models. The Strong Side is built around multi-year contracts, recurring services, digital licensing, and institutional partnerships—allowing credentialed instructors and regional organizations to do their work sustainably, at scale, and without burnout.



Third, it drives increased demand for credentialed ESD practitioners. By educating the public on what ESD is—and why credentials and standards matter—the program strengthens the entire profession and reinforces IAESDP's role in protecting quality and ethics across the field.



Finally, it establishes international coordination and shared standards. Through IAESDP, local providers are not competing in isolation; they are connected through a global framework that supports collaboration, data integrity, and professional mobility across regions.

The Strong Side helps to support existing ESD-based businesses and encourages the establishment of new providers via economic development. Our growing list of ESD Partners in 2025 includes: Wisdom for Women – Australia, ESD Brazil, ESD Canada, ESD Europe, MyPwrApp, and We are Safer Together and Assert Empowerment in the US. 2026 will bring new partnerships and opportunities around the world.



Why This Matters to IAESDP

The Strong Side embodies IAESDP's mission in action: expanding public access to Empowerment Self Defense while creating economically sustainable, ethical career pathways for ESD professionals worldwide.

It is how standards meet scale.

How values meet revenue.

How prevention becomes infrastructure.

And in 2026, it moves from foundation to force.

How The Strong Side Benefits Communities and the Public

For the public, The Strong Side is an invitation—not just to be protected, but to participate.

The program centers women, LGBTQ+ people, and marginalized communities who are disproportionately impacted by harassment and violence in public spaces. It provides access to practical, usable skills that increase safety, confidence, and agency—while meeting people where they already gather.

Just as importantly, The Strong Side reframes violence prevention as a collective responsibility. Fans are not treated as problems to be managed, but as partners in building safer, more inclusive cultures. Participation creates belonging, not surveillance.

By pairing free or low-barrier education with visible institutional commitment, the program signals something powerful: safety is not a privilege. It is part of the experience.

2025: Building the Foundation for Global Scale

In 2025, The Strong Side moved from concept to coordinated action.

The year focused on securing the framework that makes long-term impact possible: partnerships, governance, research alignment, and regional readiness. IAESDP advanced active collaboration discussions with governments and professional sports organizations in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, London, Spain, and the United States, while formalizing relationships with trusted local ESD providers including ESD Albania, ESD Europe Network, ESD Brazil, We Are Safer Together, Wisdom for Women, and ASSERT Empowerment.

At the research level, IAESDP initiated collaboration with Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health to support data collection, outcomes analysis, and public-health framing—ensuring that The Strong Side is not only visible, but verifiable.

By the end of 2025, the program stood ready for implementation: governance in place, partners aligned, and a clear pathway to multi-year pilots beginning in 2026.

Momentum is no longer theoretical. It is operational.

Communities don't just benefit from The Strong Side.

They become The Strong Side.

Our 2025 Outreach Highlights

US

- San Diego FC with a connection to SD Wave
- Nashville SC
- American Outlaws, the largest football fan club in the US: Created and distributed 30 page [Fan Safety Toolkit](#) and De-Escalation Pocket Brochure

Brazil

São Paulo

- Red Bull Bragantino
- Paulista Football Federation (FPF)
- Licensing con Latam
- ByFrog
- São Paulo Government

Rio de Janeiro

- SAF Botafogo
- Liga Ouro de Carnaval
- Beija-Flor Samba School
- State and Municipal Government of Rio de Janeiro
- Cris dos Prazeres and the Instituto Evolux

Brazil at Large

- Goiás Esporte Clube
- Municipality of Florianópolis

Europe

Spain

- Juventus-Lloret Football Club
- Development of a pilot project with 10 Empowerment Self-Defense (ESD) instructors shared across five clubs with the goal of protecting vulnerable players, empowering fans, and positioning sponsors as leaders in social responsibility.

London, UK

- Peter Malay, Honorary chairman of the Middle East Association
- Martin Dushkaj, International businessman
- Alan Rides, CEO of West London Chambers, the second largest and fastest growing Chamber of Commerce in London and the South of England

[The Strong Side™ launches pilot program in Brazil](#)

[On the ground with The Strong Side™ in São Paulo, Brazil](#)

[On the Ground with The Strong Side™ in Rio de Janeiro](#)

[The Strong Side™ has landed in Spain](#)

[The Strong Side™ has landed in the UK](#)

Financials



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW: 2021–2025

Building a profession before the market is ready to pay for one is among the most difficult financial positions any association can occupy. IAESDP has been doing exactly that — and understanding where we stand today requires understanding the environment in which we have been operating.

Over the past five years, the Association has demonstrated something significant: the ability to learn, adapt, and tighten operations under real pressure. After expenditure-driven losses peaked in 2022, the organization made a decisive course correction — sharply reducing total spending and cutting the annual burn by more than 60 percent between 2023 and 2024. Year-end cash, which had compressed to roughly \$1,840, was rebuilt to \$48,696 by the close of 2025. These are not small achievements in a field still establishing its market footprint.

2025 also brought deliberate reinvestment. Spending increased in payroll, contractor support, business development, and travel — areas that directly advance revenue generation and organizational capacity. The annual operating gap widened as a result, to approximately \$271,261, while total revenue grew modestly from \$2,165 to \$3,619. The Business Funding Loan, which has supported operations through the foundational period, stands at approximately \$1.66 million, with total net assets reflecting the cumulative deficit of this investment phase.

The honest assessment: operational discipline is improving. Revenue sustainability is not yet there. Those two facts coexist — and the second does not cancel the first.

The financial arc of IAESDP is not unusual in the history of profession-building. Associations that create standards, credentialing systems, accreditation frameworks, and professional education infrastructure routinely incur costs well ahead of the revenue those systems are designed to generate. This is structural, not incidental. In fragmented, economically constrained fields — where many practitioners work part-time, operate independently, or are still building the case internally for formal credentialing — membership and certification revenue grows slowly. The market has to mature before it can consistently support the institutions that are helping it mature.

IAESDP built the infrastructure first because it had to. The next phase is about converting that infrastructure into earned, recurring revenue — through credentialing adoption, accreditation partnerships, programmatic commercialization, and membership growth as the field continues to organize. The foundation is in place. The work ahead is activation.

Association of ESD Professionals
Statement of Activity
January 2021 - December 2025

	Jan - Dec 2021	Jan - Dec 2022	Jan - Dec 2023	Jan - Dec 2024	Jan - Dec 2025	Total
Revenue						
Career Center Income		192.32				192.32
Membership Income	1,000.00	2,000.00	14,173.20	2,164.88	3,618.51	22,956.59
Total Revenue	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,192.32	\$ 14,173.20	\$ 2,164.88	\$ 3,618.51	\$ 23,148.91
Gross Profit	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,192.32	\$ 14,173.20	\$ 2,164.88	\$ 3,618.51	\$ 23,148.91
Expenditures						
Conferences and Events	75.00	588.94	295.00	85.00	86.35	1,130.29
Contracted Services						0.00
Consultants/Contractors	78,462.03	189,954.96	155,749.83	54,745.89	92,709.27	571,621.98
Total Contracted Services	\$ 78,462.03	\$ 189,954.96	\$ 155,749.83	\$ 54,745.89	\$ 92,709.27	\$ 571,621.98
Gifts	221.47	109.57	441.62		125.00	897.66
Hiring and Recruiting	318.00	198.00	17.05		574.79	1,107.84
Human Resources Expenses	15.90					15.90
Insurance	1,592.42	1,592.42			287.93	3,472.77
Interest Paid			61.58	91.17		152.75
Meals & Entertainment					1,711.77	1,711.77
Operating/General Expenses						0.00
Bank Charges & Fees	313.86	545.00	122.75	932.53	695.28	2,609.42
Books, Subscriptions, Reference materials	268.64	69.13		138.00		475.77
Computer Hardware	2,951.22	3,578.20	72.09			6,601.51
Legal and Professional Fees	2,792.93	1,519.54	623.40			4,935.87
Accounting Fees	4,424.00	10,400.00	8,250.00	7,253.68	7,677.00	38,004.68
Business Development					11,648.25	11,648.25
Legal Fees	1,410.00	480.00	2,731.20			4,621.20
Total Legal and Professional Fees	\$ 8,626.93	\$ 12,399.54	\$ 11,604.60	\$ 7,253.68	\$ 19,325.25	\$ 59,210.00
Marketing & Communications	62.82	32,907.83	1,379.52	39.46	539.00	34,928.63
Advertising			249.53			249.53
Total Marketing & Communications	\$ 62.82	\$ 32,907.83	\$ 1,629.05	\$ 39.46	\$ 539.00	\$ 35,178.16
Merchant Processing Fees	0.27	100.69	247.00	398.93	543.50	1,290.39
Office Supplies	25.53	-0.02	115.82		270.06	411.39
Organizational Dues	620.00	295.00				915.00
Organizational Liability Insurance			1,592.42	1,592.42		3,184.84
Postage/Mailing/Shipping Expenses	80.25	54.76			58.91	193.92
Rent / Occupancy	1,164.00	1,200.00	1,067.70	300.00		3,731.70
Software and Subscriptions	6,041.59	25,577.94	15,003.12	9,913.83	14,963.07	71,499.55
Telephone/Communications /Internet	157.85	199.80	199.80	72.87		630.32
Website Domain & Hosting	269.74			576.00	2,010.62	2,856.36
Total Operating/General Expenses	\$ 20,582.70	\$ 76,927.87	\$ 31,654.35	\$ 21,217.72	\$ 38,405.69	\$ 188,788.33
Other Business Expenses					185.05	185.05
Payroll Expenses						0.00
Taxes				4,281.03	7,881.00	12,162.03
Wages				53,125.00	100,000.08	153,125.08
Total Payroll Expenses	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 57,406.03	\$ 107,881.08	\$ 165,287.11
Personnel Related Expenses						0.00
Employee Benefits						0.00
Health Insurance	6,567.70	9,935.32	18,688.07	2,241.99		37,433.08
Total Employee Benefits	\$ 6,567.70	\$ 9,935.32	\$ 18,688.07	\$ 2,241.99	\$ 0.00	\$ 37,433.08
Payroll Expenses - Worker's Comp	69.62	240.37	499.99	30.93		840.91
Payroll Service Fees	1,630.40	1,567.44	1,932.76	48.20		5,178.80
Payroll Tax Expense	9,224.68	14,618.31	18,775.27	2,595.02		45,213.28
Personnel Full time Salaries	113,409.09	178,885.57	207,195.16	29,316.63		528,806.45
Total Personnel Related Expenses	\$ 130,901.49	\$ 205,247.01	\$ 247,091.25	\$ 34,232.77	\$ 0.00	\$ 617,472.52
Professional Development		903.94		1,266.00	5,681.87	7,851.81

Reimbursement expenses			1,300.00		654.42	1,954.42
Sponsored Projects	5,790.00	22,285.03		2,154.66		30,229.69
Taxes & Licenses	956.00	550.00	660.00	203.82		2,369.82
Travel & Related Expenses				4,069.43		4,069.43
Airfare					8,969.04	8,969.04
Mileage		169.38				169.38
Travel-Lodging		586.90	2,829.91	1,146.77	10,737.79	15,301.37
Travel-Meals	103.82	71.46	162.38		2,085.62	2,423.28
Travel-Other	4,442.30	-621.46	0.00		4,784.01	8,604.85
Total Travel & Related Expenses	\$ 4,546.12	\$ 206.28	\$ 2,992.29	\$ 5,216.20	\$ 26,576.46	\$ 39,537.35
Uncategorized Expense		0.00				0.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 243,461.13	\$ 498,564.02	\$ 440,262.97	\$ 176,619.26	\$ 274,879.68	\$ 1,633,787.06
Net Operating Revenue	-\$ 242,461.13	-\$ 496,371.70	-\$ 426,089.77	-\$ 174,454.38	-\$ 271,261.17	-\$ 1,610,638.15
Net Revenue	-\$ 242,461.13	-\$ 496,371.70	-\$ 426,089.77	-\$ 174,454.38	-\$ 271,261.17	-\$ 1,610,638.15

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Balance Sheet
Association of ESD Professionals
As of December 31, 2025

Distribution account	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Assets					
Current Assets					
Bank Accounts					
Chase Checking	108,168.66	155,047.84	2,687.96	1,839.94	48,696.43
Total for Bank Accounts	108,168.66	155,047.84	2,687.96	1,839.94	48,696.43
Other Current Assets					
QuickBooks Tax Holding Account					1,435.75
Undeposited Funds		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total for Other Current Assets		0.00	0.00	0.00	1,435.75
Total for Current Assets	108,168.66	155,047.84	2,687.96	1,839.94	50,132.18
Total for Assets	108,168.66	155,047.84	2,687.96	1,839.94	50,132.18
Liabilities and Equity					
Liabilities					
Current Liabilities					
Credit Cards					
Chase Credit Card (deleted)	629.79	137.95	4,070.34	0.00	0.00
Total for Credit Cards	629.79	137.95	4,070.34	0.00	0.00
Other Current Liabilities					
Direct Deposit Payable				0.00	0.00
Health Insurance Payable		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Payroll Liabilities					
Federal Taxes (941/943/944)				1,651.34	1,204.75
Federal Unemployment (940)				42.00	42.00
TN Quarterly Taxes				189.00	189.00
Total for Payroll Liabilities				1,882.34	1,435.75
Payroll Tax Payable		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total for Other Current Liabilities		0.00	0.00	1,882.34	1,435.75
Total for Current Liabilities	629.79	137.95	4,070.34	1,882.34	1,435.75
Long-term Liabilities					
Business Funding Loan	350,000.00	893,332.50	1,163,115.00	1,339,115.00	1,659,115.00
Total for Long-term Liabilities	350,000.00	893,332.50	1,163,115.00	1,339,115.00	1,659,115.00
Total for Liabilities	350,629.79	893,470.45	1,167,185.34	1,340,997.34	1,660,550.75
Equity					
Retained Earnings		-242,050.91	-738,407.61	-1,164,703.02	-1,339,157.40
Net Income	-242,461.13	-496,371.70	-426,089.77	-174,454.38	-271,261.17
Total for Equity	-242,461.13	-738,422.61	-1,164,497.38	-1,339,157.40	-1,610,418.57
Total for Liabilities and Equity	108,168.66	155,047.84	2,687.96	1,839.94	50,132.18

Cash Basis Thursday, January 15, 2026 07:17 PM GMTZ

**2026 - 2030
Strategic Goals**



Goal 1: Professionalize the ESD Industry

By 2028, Empowerment Self Defense will operate as a fully credentialed and accredited profession, with clear standards recognized by the public, institutions, and employers.

In 2026, IAESDP will:

- Expand the ladder of credentials with the addition of ESD Educator (ESDE) for Trainer-of-Trainers, ESD Workplace (ESDW) for Corporate ESD Trainers, with additional credentials in development
- Expand language access to Credentialing and Accreditation processes
- Publish industry-wide education, ethics, and practice standards
- Accredite a first cohort of ESD training and certificate programs by Q1
- Establish accreditation as an industry expectation by year's end

This work lays the foundation for public trust, workforce mobility, and long-term market stability.

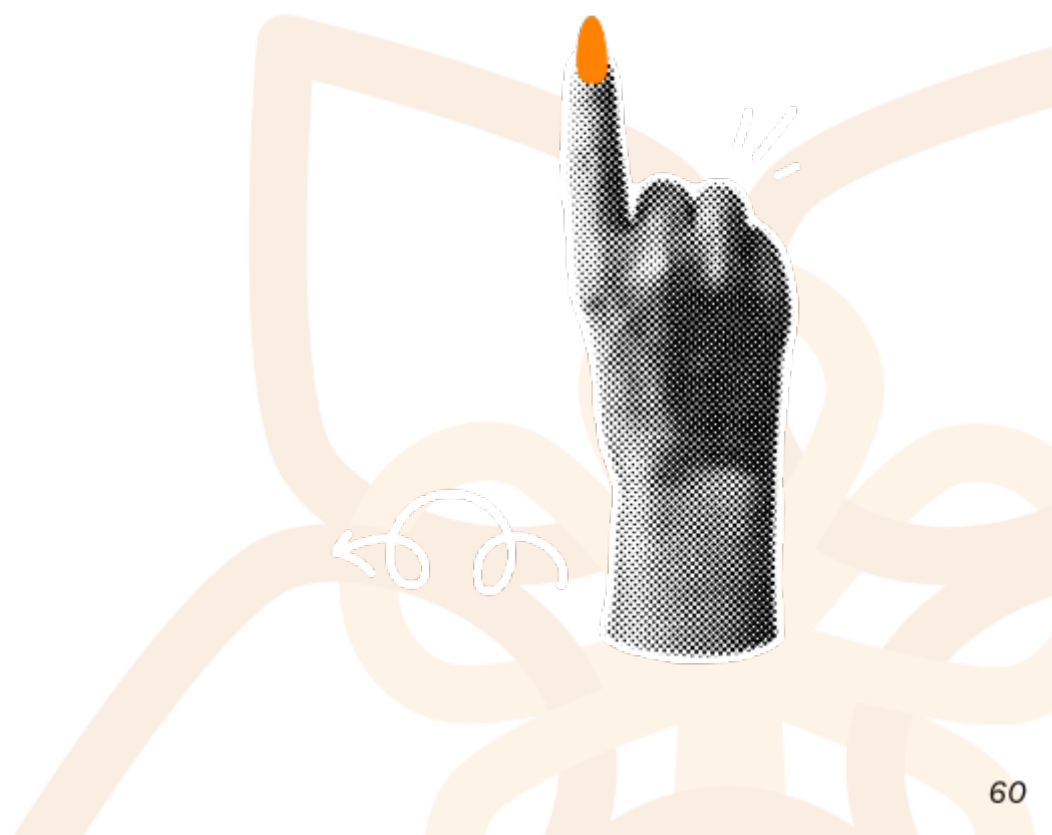
Goal 2: Expand Credentialed Self Defense Workforce Capacity

IAESDP will transition the field from informal training pathways to a verified professional workforce, aligned with institutional and employer expectations.

From 2026–2028, the Association will:

- Complete the transition to a fully credentialed ESD workforce
- Support instructors from adjacent fields (martial arts, self-defense, firearms, education, advocacy) in becoming ESD-credentialed
- Introduce standardized pricing guidance in 2026, with enforced industry ranges beginning in 2027, strengthening instructor sustainability and client negotiations

This shifts ESD from fragmented service delivery to a coordinated professional market.



Goal 3: Grow and Activate a Strong Membership Base

Membership growth will be paired with meaningful engagement, not just enrollment.

In 2026, IAESDP will:

- Grow membership by 30% while maintaining 85%+ renewal
- Optimize the Member Portal as a professional hub, prioritizing:
 - Job and program opportunities
 - Networking, mentorship, and peer support
 - Teaching and content resources
 - Business tools, discounts, and partnerships
- Introduce new features in direct response to member needs, not speculative tech buildouts

Membership will function as an active professional network—not a passive credential list.

Goal 4: Build Public Trust and Visibility for ESD

IAESDP will position Empowerment Self Defense as the gold standard in violence prevention education for the public.

In 2026, the Association will:

- Elevate public understanding of what ESD is and why credentialed professionals matter
- Drive traffic and conversion through the ESDP Directory
- Establish #FightForward as an industry-wide public-facing message, campaign, and philosophy
- Reach a primary audience of 18–45 year-olds, with a focus on female-identifying people while remaining fully gender-inclusive

The goal is clarity, accessibility, and trust—without jargon or gatekeeping.



Goal 5: Operationalize Job Creation and Placement

IAESDP will fully launch a formal Job & Program Placement Service in 2026, prioritizing credentialed professionals and members.

This includes:

- A phased rollout beginning in Washington, DC
- Placement for credentialed members in:
 - Programs, events, and deployments
 - Institutional and organizational contracts
- Alignment with IAESDP standards, credentials, and ethical oversight

This goal directly supports sustainable careers and reduces reliance on unpaid or underpaid labor.

From Standards to Jobs

How IAESDP turns professional standards into real, paid work

The Empowerment Self-Defense field does not suffer from a lack of passion or skill. It suffers from a lack of structure. For decades, ESD practitioners were trained—but not formally recognized, regulated, or connected to sustained employment pipelines. The International Association of ESD Professionals exists to change that.

International Association of ESD Professionals built a closed-loop professional ecosystem that links standards → credentials → market demand → jobs.

Step 1: Establishing Industry Standards

IAESDP develops and maintains international standards, regulations, and ethical frameworks for ESD professionals. These standards define:

- What competent, trauma-informed ESD instruction looks like
- What organizations can reasonably expect when hiring ESD professionals
- What accountability and safeguarding mechanisms protect the public and the workforce

Standards are the foundation that allows ESD to be taken seriously by institutions, governments, sponsors, and employers.

Step 2: Credentialing the Workforce

Standards alone do not create jobs. Credentials do.

IAESDP translates standards into formal credentials through proctored exams, multilingual access, and transparent requirements. Credentialing:

- Distinguishes qualified professionals from unverified providers
- Creates a shared language for procurement, contracts, and risk management
- Allows employers to hire with confidence and consistency

This moves ESD from an informal training culture into a recognized profession.

Step 3: Creating Market Demand

With standards and credentials in place, IAESDP actively builds demand for ESD labor.

Through programs like The Strong Side, IAESDP partners with sports organizations, sponsors, municipalities, and institutions to design large-scale, funded safety and violence-prevention initiatives. These programs are intentionally built to:

- Require credentialed ESD professionals
- Operate across multiple cities and countries
- Generate repeat, contract-based work rather than one-off workshops

Demand is not left to chance—it is designed.

Step 4: Converting Demand into Jobs

Once demand exists, IAESDP functions as a workforce connector—much like a trade association or labor guild.

Credentialed professionals receive:

- First access to paid opportunities
- Clear role definitions and expectations
- Alignment between training, credentials, and real-world work

This is how ESD stops relying on volunteerism and burnout—and starts supporting sustainable careers.

Why This Matters

Without standards, there is no credibility.

Without credentials, there is no trust.

Without demand, there are no jobs.

IAESDP is the only organization deliberately building all four, standards, credentials, demand, and placement, as one integrated system.

This is how an industry grows. This is how a workforce stabilizes. This is how ESD professionals earn a living doing work that matters.



Goal 6: Scale the Industry Economy Through The Strong Side

The Strong Side will serve as IAESDP's primary economic engine, generating paid work while expanding public access to violence prevention education.

In 2026, IAESDP will:

- Secure 5 team contracts and 1 corporate sponsor
- Deploy credentialed ESD professionals through long-term, funded programs
- Reinvest the vast majority of Strong Side revenue into:
 - ESD scholarships
 - Grants
 - Workforce development programs

This ensures that industry growth directly benefits practitioners and communities.

Goal 7: Strengthen Governance, Oversight, and Accountability

IAESDP will continue building the infrastructure required of a mature industry association.

In 2026, this includes:

- Expanding the ESD Credentialing Committee (ECC)
- Fully operationalizing Continuing Education tracking and compliance
- Establishing transparent systems for accreditation review, complaints, and quality assurance
- Improving internal tracking, methodologies, and cross-team workflows

Strong governance protects both the public and the profession.

ROADMAP & MILESTONES

2026

- Expanding credential ladder (ESDP, ESDA, ESDE, ESDW)
- Accredite first cohort of programs (Q1)
- Publish industry pricing guidelines
- Launch Job Placement Program (DC pilot)
- Secure 5 Strong Side team contracts + 1 sponsor
- Optimize Member Portal for jobs, networking, resources
- Establish #FightForward as industry-wide campaign

2027

- Enforce standardized pricing ranges
- Expand job placement regionally
- Increase accredited program participation
- Scale Strong Side to additional sports and markets
- Deepen public-facing ESD education campaigns
- Secure an additional 15 Strong Side team contracts + 1 sponsor

2028

- Achieve a fully credentialed and accredited ESD industry
- Normalize credentialing and accreditation as baseline expectations
- Expand workforce pipelines nationally and internationally
- Secure additional Strong Side team contracts and sponsors + 2 Federation Contracts, expand into additional sports

2029–2030

- Mature placement systems and international partnerships
- Expand credential specializations
- Solidify ESD as a recognized professional sector within violence prevention and public safety ecosystems
- Full Strong Side program deployment across teams and sports

2025 Annual Report



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
ESD PROFESSIONALS

✉ hello@esdprofessionals.org

🌐 esdprofessionals.org