



Reimagining the CPA Pipeline – Together

OVERVIEW

The collaboration between the Center for Accounting Transformation and the Illinois CPA Society illustrates what is possible when research, leadership, and partnership converge around a shared mission. Together, we transformed a state-level study into a nationally recognized research initiative that now serves as a foundation for workforce strategy across the profession.

This success is more than a completed project – it is a proven model for how organizations can work with the Center to accelerate insight, expand influence, and drive meaningful change.

CHALLENGE

The accounting profession faces a systemic workforce crisis. Declining enrollments, fewer CPA candidates, retention pressures, and shifting professional expectations are converging into a national talent gap. While the symptoms are widely acknowledged, the underlying causes remain misunderstood and poorly addressed.

Solving challenges of this scale requires collaboration that extends beyond individual organizations or regions.

SOLUTION

The Center for Accounting Transformation served as a strategic research and collaboration partner to the Illinois CPA Society, expanding its original pipeline study into a national initiative.

Through this partnership, the Center provided research infrastructure, academic engagement, survey design enhancement, and national distribution capabilities – creating a stronger, more credible body of evidence for the profession.

This approach reflects the Center's broader model: connecting organizations, researchers, educators, and practitioners to move from insight to action.

IMPACT

The expanded study delivered deeper understanding of workforce culture, retention, inclusion, and career motivation – informed directly by students, recent graduates, and emerging professionals nationwide. It elevated the Illinois CPA Society's national influence and equipped the profession with clearer, data-driven guidance for long-term workforce development.

Just as importantly, the collaboration demonstrated how organizations can leverage the Center's platform to magnify the reach and relevance of their work.

CASE IN FOCUS

A landmark national study advanced through strategic partnership with the Center for Accounting Transformation, highlighting the power of collaborative research to drive solutions for the profession's most urgent challenges. It reflects how shared commitment, data-driven insight, and coordinated action can translate research into meaningful, long-term impact for the accounting profession.

Results:

- 7,780 completed national survey responses
- Engagement with over 30 State CPA Societies and Professional Associations as well as 50 colleges and universities
- Strengthened survey design and analytical rigor
- Publication of a nationally recognized report:
- Re-Decoding the Decline: An Updated CPA Pipeline Report (2023)
- Expanded national influence for the Illinois CPA Society
- A scalable model for future research partnerships