

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUR EVERGREEN INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES	2
OUR MISSION	3
OUR VISION	5
OUR VALUES	6
OUR RISING STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS	7

OUR EVERGREEN INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES: EMBEDDING CONTINUITY THROUGH THE RISING STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

It is important to note at the outset that the strategic priority areas that follow at the close of this document do not replace or diminish ACEC's longstanding objectives. Rather, they carry them forward in a more integrated and operational form. The organization's Evergreen Institutional Objectives are embedded throughout these priorities, ensuring that ACEC's core commitments remain active drivers of strategy rather than static statements of intent. In practice, this means that digital transformation is addressed with an emphasis on organizational resilience; defending licensure is approached through the lens of professional integrity; membership growth is advanced through deeper collaboration across the Federation; and workforce development is pursued in ways that cultivate belonging and long-term career pathways.

By weaving these enduring principles into each strategic priority area, ACEC preserves continuity with its mission and values while positioning the organization to respond to rising challenges and opportunities. The result is a strategic framework that honors what has guided ACEC historically while equipping it to act decisively in a rapidly changing environment.

The strategic priority areas are where strategy moves from aspiration to execution. They translate ACEC's vision into coordinated action, aligning leadership, staff, and member firms around a shared set of outcomes. Through these priorities, ACEC strengthens its ability to support member firms, elevate the engineering profession, and ensure that the organization remains resilient, respected, and future-ready. In doing so, the plan demonstrates a central principle of effective strategy: sustained impact is achieved through disciplined focus.

OUR MISSION

“ACEC advances the business of engineering—empowering firms, protecting the profession, and uniting the federation to build a thriving, respected, and future-ready industry.”

A CALL TO CONFIDENCE

This mission invites confidence—from members, staff, leaders, and stakeholders. It affirms what ACEC is and what ACEC is becoming: A federation not just of firms, but of leaders. A voice not just for advocacy, but for vision. A partner not just for today’s needs, but for tomorrow’s challenges.

**ACEC is here to advance the business of engineering.
The profession deserves nothing less.**

DISSECTING THE MISSION: STRATEGIC PILLARS AND INSTITUTIONAL PROMISES

1. “Advances the business of engineering”

This is our central claim and strategic differentiator. No other organization owns this space the way ACEC does. This phrase signals our commitment to helping firms not just operate, but lead. It positions ACEC at the intersection of commerce and profession, of impact and innovation.

It is also a mandate—to develop strategy, shape policy, lead advocacy, and create tools that directly support business success in a complex, competitive environment.

2. “Empowering firms”

Firms are the heartbeat of ACEC. This clause acknowledges that every member—from national-scale companies to small firms—is navigating transformation in technology, talent, and economics.

Empowerment means:

- Delivering actionable intelligence and research
- Advocating for a fair and thriving business environment
- Elevating firm leaders through professional development and influence
- Reducing risk and enhancing opportunity across market sectors

3. “Protecting the profession.”

This phrase asserts our guardianship over licensure, ethics, and standards. Protection is not passive; it is proactive, muscular, and relentless. It includes:

- Advocacy in state and federal arenas
- Fighting commoditization of services
- Promoting the essential societal value of engineering
- Ensuring that high standards for health, safety, and welfare remain intact

4. “Uniting the federation”

ACEC is a federation—not just a national body, but a system of interdependent Member Organizations. Unity is essential for scale, influence, and trust. This language calls on us to:

- Collaborate intentionally across National and MOs
- Align strategic goals between National and MOs
- Share insights, tools, and advocacy resources
- Build joint programming and leadership pipelines
- Communicate consistently and powerfully, as one voice

5. “A thriving, respected, and future-ready industry”

This phrase names the outcome we are working toward. Not survival—success. Not tradition—relevance. This future-forward orientation signals that ACEC is committed to preparing firms and the profession for what’s next, even when that future is unpredictable.

This includes:

- Foresight and scenario planning through the Future Focused Task Force (FFTF), which is envisioned to follow the adoption of the strategic priorities
- Embracing digital transformation and AI adaptation
- Leading on workforce development, a sense of belonging, and generational engagement
- Expanding the public’s understanding of the profession’s value

OUR VISION

OUR VISION STATEMENT

A vision of the industry

An engineering industry led by thriving firms, grounded in professional integrity, and powered by innovation—advancing a resilient, respected, and future-ready profession that strengthens public safety, economic vitality, and quality of life.

A vision of our organization

A chief strategic leader for the business of engineering in the built environment, driving change, uniting the federation, and delivering the insight, advocacy, and alignment firms need to succeed in a dynamic world.

**This vision calls us to lead—
with strategy, with unity, and with the full force of the Federation behind it.**

OUR VALUES

1. **Integrity**

We uphold the highest ethical standards in everything we do. Integrity underpins our credibility as advocates, our leadership in the profession, and the trust placed in us by the public.

2. **Service**

We serve our member firms, our Federation, and the public good. We measure success not just by what we accomplish, but by the value we create for others.

3. **Leadership**

We lead with foresight, courage, and clarity. As the voice of the business of engineering, ACEC embraces its responsibility to drive positive change for the profession and society.

4. **Belonging**

We believe every voice matters. We are committed to building an organization and profession where all individuals—regardless of background—can thrive, lead, and shape the future.

5. **Collaboration**

Our strength lies in unity. Through national and state-level partnership, member engagement, and coalition building, we achieve impact that no single entity could accomplish alone.

6. **Resilience**

We adapt, evolve, and endure. Whether navigating disruption or driving innovation, ACEC is committed to long-term sustainability for both the profession and the organization.

OUR RISING STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

Each priority in this plan has been chosen because it addresses a foundational challenge and opportunity. These are not siloed initiatives. They are dynamic and interdependent, forming a strategic ecosystem. Progress in one strengthens the others, and they are rising to the top right now.

THE FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

Note: The following four priorities are listed not in order of importance but alphabetically for ease of reference.

1. **Digital Transformation:** Equip firms to embrace innovation through shared knowledge, technology-forward resources, and scalable solutions.
2. **Licensure Protection:** Defend state-based licensure structures, elevate the profession's value to society, and counter threats to engineering's role in safeguarding the public.
3. **Membership Growth:** Build federation-wide momentum through National-MO alignment, clearer value propositions, and expanded firm participation.
4. **Workforce Development:** Strengthen the education-to-career pipeline, support professional development within firms, and position engineering as a compelling career of choice.

PRIORITY AREA A: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Key Objectives and Tactical Pathways

1. Increase Advocacy for Digital Transformation

ACEC will advocate for policy and contracting practices that support digital integration. This includes promoting value-based and lump-sum contracting, collaborating with MOs to expand state-level adoption, and partnering with client organizations, both public and private to make digital delivery the national standard.

2. Engage Coalitions and Committees to Meet Member Needs

ACEC will leverage its coalitions, committees, and forums to understand member challenges and deliver targeted resources. Education sessions, surveys, and lunch-and-learn programs will provide members with the knowledge and tools to evaluate and adopt digital solutions effectively.

3. Anticipate and Address Digital Disruptions

ACEC will proactively explore how artificial intelligence and automation will redefine professional standards of care, workflows, quality control programs, competition, and liability. Engaging the Risk Management Committee and Legal Counsel Forum will also help ensure firms are prepared for emerging technologies that alter design and delivery models.

4. Equip Firms with a Self-Assessment Tool

ACEC will develop a Digital Transformation Self-Assessment Tool to help firms evaluate readiness, identify capability gaps, and track improvement. Modeled after the AI Readiness Tool, it will guide data-driven decision-making and investment in digital maturity.

Looking ahead, success will mean that member firms have clear guidance and practical tools to navigate digital change with confidence. ACEC will be recognized as the national leader in responsible digital transformation, shaping contracting norms, informing standards of care, and reducing risk while accelerating innovation. Firms will demonstrate measurable progress in digital maturity, stronger alignment between technology and business strategy, and greater resilience in a rapidly evolving delivery environment. Digital transformation will no longer feel reactive or fragmented, but intentional, supported, and embedded across the profession.

PRIORITY AREA B: LICENSURE PROTECTION

Professional licensure is the cornerstone of public trust in engineering. It validates expertise, enforces accountability, and affirms that engineers protect the health, safety, and welfare of society. Yet this foundation faces growing challenges—from deregulatory political movements and inconsistent state standards to the disruptions of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Defending licensure is not merely about protecting regulatory frameworks; it is about safeguarding the profession’s credibility and identity. Without robust licensure protections, engineers risk commoditization, weakened influence, and erosion of public confidence.

ACEC must adopt a proactive, coordinated approach. This includes both defensive actions—mobilizing against harmful legislation and deregulatory campaigns—and proactive leadership—raising public awareness, building strategic coalitions, and advancing modernized licensure models that anticipate future risks. Licensure protection is not just a policy issue; it is a defining commitment to the integrity of the engineering profession.

Key Objectives and Tactical Pathways

1. Increase Awareness Among Key Stakeholders

ACEC will elevate understanding of licensure’s essential role in protecting public health, safety, and welfare. Through a national education campaign, member-facing toolkits, and real-world case studies, ACEC will reinforce licensure as a public safeguard and counter arguments for deregulation.

2. Strengthen Strategic Engagement with Allies, Adversaries, and Stakeholders

ACEC will unite allies, anticipate adversaries, and expand stakeholder engagement to defend licensure on multiple fronts. This includes formal joint initiatives with partner organizations, quarterly coordination meetings, threat monitoring, publication of counter-narratives, and outreach to non-engineering advocates such as owners and insurers.

3. Enable State-Level Advocacy and Action

Recognizing that licensure battles occur at the state level, ACEC will equip MOs and advocates with the data, tools, and messaging needed to mount effective defenses. Coordinated advocacy days, real-time legislative dashboards, and advocacy toolkits will empower states to act swiftly and decisively.

Over the next several years, success will mean that licensure is not only preserved but strengthened—ensuring engineers remain trusted professionals whose work protects and enhances public welfare.

PRIORITY AREA C: MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

ACEC's influence, financial sustainability, and ability to speak with a unified voice depend on the strength and diversity of its membership. Growth must go beyond numbers—it should reflect who is represented, how engaged members are, and whether retention translates expansion into lasting strength.

As the engineering landscape evolves—with new firm types and disciplines, hybrid service models, and generational shifts—ACEC must reimagine membership growth. This includes expanding into new markets such as private-sector providers and emerging and underrepresented disciplines, while ensuring existing members see clear return on investment and sustained engagement at every level.

Membership Growth will therefore be pursued through three tactical pathways: Attraction, Retention, and Engagement. Together, these pathways emphasize reach, representation, and relevance—building a federation that is larger, more connected, and more impactful.

Key Objectives and Tactical Pathways

1. Strategic Attraction and Market Expansion

ACEC will expand its base by recruiting firms in underrepresented markets and segments where its value proposition is strongest. Growth efforts will be intentional, data-driven, and targeted, focusing resources where ACEC can deliver the greatest return for new members.

2. Retention and Sustained Member Value

Sustained growth depends on retention. ACEC will strengthen return on investment by tailoring communications, identifying early warning signs of disengagement, and delivering high-value resources that meet the needs of firms of all sizes. This approach will ensure continued satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

3. Engagement and Federation Connectivity

True growth requires active participation, not just membership dues. ACEC will create and expand opportunities for engagement across all levels of the Federation—committees, coalitions, forums, events, and leadership pathways—ensuring members at every level have meaningful ways to connect and contribute.

Looking ahead, success will mean that recruitment campaigns are launched with measurable pipelines, the Engagement Roadmap is operational, and the retention dashboard and small-firm survey are driving data-informed outreach to sustain momentum and deepen relationships.

PRIORITY AREA D: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The engineering profession is standing at a demographic and generational crossroads. A wave of seasoned professionals is approaching retirement, while too few young people are choosing engineering as their career path. Participation among key demographic groups continues to decline, and competition from adjacent industries further threatens the pipeline. Meanwhile, mid-level retention within member firms becomes increasingly difficult, with the firms in the engineering industry pursuing the same pool of talent. The result is not merely a staffing shortage; it is a structural challenge that directly impacts business continuity, innovation capacity, and the profession's ability to safeguard public welfare.

For ACEC, workforce development is more than a priority—it is a defining responsibility. To secure the future of engineering, ACEC must elevate the profession as a career of choice, amplifying its essential role in society. It must convene partners across education, government, and industry to widen access, create new on-ramps, and strengthen the leadership pipeline. And it must support its member firms by providing tools to enhance employee engagement, mentorship, growth, and recognition. By doing so, ACEC positions itself as the national catalyst for ensuring the profession's long-term sustainability and vitality—building not just a workforce for today, but a resilient foundation for the next generation of engineers.

Key Objectives and Tactical Pathways

1. Broaden Opportunities to Increase the Workforce

ACEC will champion federal and state policies, educational investment, and collaborative partnerships to expand the pool of engineering talent. Through visa reform, incentives for STEM engagement and program enrollment, and coalition-building with academia and industry, ACEC will open and diversify the pathways into engineering careers.

2. Attract New Talent to the Engineering Industry

ACEC will help firms address workforce decline through diversified recruitment. This includes leveraging research to identify skills gaps, clarifying licensing hurdles, and cultivating non-traditional partners to recruit essential non-technical staff—ensuring member firms have the people and digital resources they need to thrive.

3. Enhance Leadership Transition and Development

ACEC will strengthen the profession's future by preparing emerging leaders. By mapping existing programs, creating accessible entry points for young professionals, and expanding national offerings such as the Business of Design Consulting, Pathways, and the Senior Executives Institute (SEI), ACEC will support smooth leadership transitions and cultivate a new generation of engaged leaders.

4. Retain Top Talent in the Engineering Industry

ACEC will support its member firms in strengthening employee retention through enhanced engagement, professional growth, and workplace culture. This support includes leveraging data to understand turnover trends, promoting best practices for employee development and recognition, and fostering mentorship and leadership pathways that keep top performers invested in their firms—ensuring member firms remain strong, stable, and competitive.

In the coming years, success will mean more young professionals actively engaged in ACEC at every level; measurable growth in participation in national leadership programs; new policies that expand pathways into the profession; and a stronger, more visible pipeline for the next generation of engineers.