ACEC
American Council of Engineering Companies
of Washington

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PROFESSIONALS

2026-2027

9 MONTH-SEMINAR

Starts September 8, 2026

08:00am - 12:00pm

Bellevue, WA

Core Competencies for Professionals 26-27

Your Gateway to Leadership Excellence

Are You Ready to Elevate Your Leadership and Business Skills?

Are you ready to grow as a leader and strengthen the core business skills that drive success in the A/E industry? ACEC Washington's Core Competencies for Professionals program is a 9-month seminar series designed to help emerging leaders, project managers, senior technical professionals, and future principals build the leadership, business, financial, client, talent, and strategic skills needed to lead with confidence.
This regional, cost-effective, and industry-focused program provides practical training for professionals who are ready to better understand the business of engineering and take the next step in their leadership journey.

What's New This Year?
For the 2026–2027 cycle, CCP has been refreshed based on participant feedback and current A/E industry needs. This year's program keeps the strong foundation of the CCP curriculum while adding timely topics and more practical, interactive learning. New and expanded areas include:

- AI, digital delivery, and technology in A/E firms
- Project profitability and business fundamentals
- Client communication and business development
- Strategic talent management and performance leadership
- Advocacy and public policy
- A final executive leadership capstone simulation

Each session is designed to move beyond theory and help participants apply what they are learning through real-world A/E scenarios, case studies, peer discussion, and interactive exercises.
Participants will not just learn concepts — they will practice applying them.

Why Enroll in the CCP Program?

- Build Essential Business Competencies
- Gain practical knowledge in finance, project profitability, ownership transition, contracts, liability, talent strategy, business development, strategic planning, advocacy, and technology.
- Expand Your Leadership Toolbox
- Learn how to lead teams, communicate effectively, manage risk, support employee development, strengthen client relationships, and make better business decisions.
- Understand the Business of Engineering
- Develop a stronger understanding of how A/E firms operate, compete, manage people, serve clients, protect profitability, and plan for long-term success.
- Learn Through Practical A/E Scenarios
- Each session includes discussion, case studies, or interactive exercises designed around real challenges facing A/E firms.
- Build Peer and Industry Connections
- Connect with professionals from firms across the region and learn alongside other emerging leaders throughout the 9-month cohort experience.
- Earn Professional Recognition
- Participants who complete the program earn 36 PDHs and an ACEC Washington Certificate of Completion.
- Be Recognized at Spring Conference
- Participants who attend all CCP sessions will receive a complimentary registration to the ACEC Washington Spring Conference, where they will be recognized and presented with their completion diploma.

Location: Bellevue, WA – Convenient and accessible.

Limited Spots Available (30) – Register Today! Take the first step toward becoming a transformative leader in the A/E industry. Join the CCP Program and invest in your future success. Registration is now open!
For more information, visit **the event website** or contact Pamela Beachnau at pbeachnau@acec-wa.org

SCHEDULE 2026-2027

Classes are held the second Tuesday of the month from 8:00am-12:00pm in Bellevue, WA

- **September 8, 2026 : Leadership, Personal Mastery & Inclusive Team Culture with Mike Baker**
- **October 6, 2026: Finance, Project Profitability & Business Fundamental with Jannette Lee**
- **November 10, 2026: Ownership Transition & Building Shareholder Value with David Cohen**
- **December 8, 2026: Multiply Judgment: AI and the Future A/E Principal with Jigar Desai**
- **January 12, 2027: Contracts, Liability & Client Negotiation with Jennifer Beyerlein and Andrew Gabel**
- **February 9, 2026: Strategic Talent Management & Performance Leadership with Kelly Hatfield + Amelia Ransom (<u>EXTENDED SESSION</u>)**
- **March 9, 2026: Strategic Planning, Market Positioning with Steve Walker + Advocacy Importance with Van Collins (EXTENDED SESSION)**
- **April 6, 2026: Business Development & Strategic Marketing with Adrienne Lindsey**
- **May 4, 2026: Executive Leadership Capstone: Lead the Firm Simulation**

Leadership, Personal Mastery & Team Culture
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2026

Speaker: Mike Baker

Leadership is more than a title. It is a daily practice shaped by self-awareness, communication, trust, accountability, and the ability to lead people through complexity. This opening CCP session will set the tone for the full 9-month program by helping participants better understand themselves as leaders and identify the behaviors they want to strengthen as they grow into larger roles within their firms.

Participants will explore their personal leadership style, communication habits, emotional intelligence, blind spots, and approach to conflict. The session will also focus on how leaders build healthy team cultures where people feel trusted, accountable, and able to contribute fully.
Through real A/E leadership scenarios, discussion, and practical exercises, participants will examine how emerging leaders can navigate difficult conversations, build credibility, strengthen relationships, and create the conditions for better teamwork and performance.

Participants will explore:

- Leadership as a daily practice, not just a position or title
- Personal leadership style and self-awareness
- Emotional intelligence and communication habits
- Building trust and credibility with teams and clients
- Navigating conflict and difficult conversations
- Creating a healthy team culture rooted in accountability, respect, and clear communication
- Leading through change, pressure, and uncertainty in A/E firms

Interactive Component:
Leadership Mirror Exercise — Participants identify one leadership strength, one blind spot, and one leadership behavior they want to practice throughout the CCP cycle.

Meet Your Presenter
Mike is a former decorated active-duty Army officer and is a Senior Vice President and Board Member for the mid-sized A&E firm where he's worked for over 29 years, David Evans and Associates, Inc. He's currently leading program management teams on two Portland area Mega Projects. He specializes in designing and implementing collaborative partnering and engagement processes with his clients on high impact projects that are politically charged and stakeholder intensive. The combined construction value of his last six projects exceeds $5-billion. From 2002-10, Mike led his firm's Future Leader program- an immersive early career experience that equips participants to reach, and coach others to reach, higher personal and professional performance levels. Mike helps people access their 'aha' moments and inspire them to apply new learning and ideas to their practical day-today lives with increased energy and accountability.

Finance, Project Profitability & Business Fundamentals
Date: Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Speaker: Jennette Lee

Strong technical work does not always translate into strong financial performance. This session will help participants understand the business and financial fundamentals that drive A/E firm success, with a special focus on project profitability and the decisions project managers and emerging leaders influence every day.

Participants will learn how engineering firms make money, how projects lose profitability, and why financial literacy is an essential leadership skill. The session will move beyond accounting basics to focus on the practical financial concepts that matter most to project managers, team leads, and future principals.

Topics may include revenue, profit, utilization, labor costs, overhead, billing, accounts receivable, work-in-progress, write-offs, scope creep, forecasting, and financial red flags. Participants will also explore how project decisions, communication, staffing, documentation, and client management affect profitability.

Participants will explore:

- How A/E firms make and lose money
- Project profitability and financial performance
- Budget vs. actuals
- Labor, utilization, overhead, and multiplier concepts
- Billing, collections, WIP, AR, and write-offs
- Scope creep and additional services
- Forecasting and financial dashboards
- Financial red flags project managers should recognize
- How project management decisions affect firm performance

Interactive Component:

Project Profitability Case Study — Participants review a fictional project dashboard and identify financial warning signs, project risks, and leadership actions needed to protect profitability.

Meet Your Speaker

Jennette Lee serves as Chief Financial Officer at FSi Engineers, bringing more than 18 years of experience in financial leadership for complex, multi-office professional services firms. She oversees the firm's financial operations, banking relationships, debt compliance, enterprise planning, and strategic financial reporting.

Jennette specializes in building scalable finance infrastructure, strengthening financial controls, and leading high-performing teams that drive accountability, operational excellence, and long-term business success.

Ownership Transition & Building Shareholder Value

Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2026

Speaker: David Cohen

Ownership transition is one of the most important long-term issues facing A/E firms. This session will help participants understand how firms build value, prepare future owners, and plan for sustainable leadership and ownership transitions.

Designed for emerging leaders and future principals, this session will explain why ownership matters even before someone becomes an owner. Participants will explore the connection between firm performance, leadership development, shareholder value, ownership structure, and long-term independence.

The session will help participants better understand how decisions around profitability, client relationships, staff development, risk management, and strategic focus all influence firm value. Participants will also examine what future owners need to know, how firms prepare the next generation of leaders, and what it means to think like a shareholder.

Participants will explore:

- Why ownership transition matters in A/E firms
- How firms build shareholder value
- What future owners need to understand before becoming shareholders
- Leadership development and succession planning
- Internal ownership transition considerations
- Firm value, profitability, risk, and long-term sustainability
- How emerging leaders can begin thinking like future owners
- The responsibilities and expectations of ownership

Interactive Component:

Future Shareholder Readiness Discussion — Participants discuss what they would need to learn, demonstrate, and contribute to be considered future owners or senior firm leaders.

Meet Your Presenter

David Cohen, Managing Director of Matheson Financial Advisors, brings over twenty-five years of experience in consulting Architecture, Engineering, and Environmental Consulting clients on ownership transition, business valuation, financial management, and mergers and acquisitions (M&A). As an expert in the industry and financial advisory services, David has worked with over 1000 firms across the United States and conducts seminars on the topics of financial management, valuation, ownership transition planning, and M&A for the design industry. In addition, to leading in-house educational presentations for firms nationwide, Davis is an instructor for the ACEC Business of Design Consulting Program and Pathways to Executive Leadership Programs and speaks at ACEC and AIA National and State events.. David earned both his BBA and JD from the University of Miami and is licensed to practice law in Florida and Massachusetts as well as achieving the coveted Accredited Senior Appraiser designation with the American Society if Appraisers.

Multiply Judgment: AI and the Future A/E Principal

Date: Tuesday, December 8, 2026

Speaker: Jigar Desai

Artificial intelligence adds. Judgment multiplies. For emerging leaders and future principals in A/E firms, these tools have lowered the cost of producing work that looks capable and raised the premium on judgment. The question is not merely whether they can perform a task. The question is which decisions still belong to a professional, and how a rising leader moves a firm from curiosity to disciplined adoption. Over the course of the session, participants will work through realistic firm decisions individually and in small teams, building toward a completed sample work product.

Participants will:

- Choose What to Pilot: Evaluate where artificial intelligence creates genuine leverage in A/E workflows, and where it introduces risk that outweighs the gain.
- Build Practical Fluency: Complete a realistic firm task from start to finish using current tools.
- Compare Results, Not Just Methods: Examine why the same task produces different outputs across different tools and users, and what that variation means for professional reliance.
- Apply Professional Judgment: Establish where human review, quality control, and professional accountability remain non-negotiable regardless of how capable the tool becomes.
- Understand the Guardrails: Address client confidentiality, data governance, cybersecurity awareness, and what should never be entered into public tools.
- Pitch the Pilot: Translate a good idea into an internal business case, and understand how a firm actually decides to invest in something new.

Interactive Leadership Lab: From Evaluation to Adoption

Participants will work individually and in small teams through three connected stages, using prepared, nonconfidential scenarios drawn from common A/E firm situations:

- Evaluate: Sort a set of realistic use cases into categories, including safe to pilot now, useful but requires policy or training, high risk and requires approval, and do not use.
- Build: Work a selected use case live, then compare results across the team and account for the differences.
- Pitch and Debrief: Convert the work into a short internal pitch, present it to the group, and receive peer feedback on the business case.

No confidential firm or client information will be used. Participants will leave with a working method for evaluating new tools, a completed sample work product, and a structure for bringing a proposal to firm leadership.

Meet Your Presenter

Jigar Desai, Ph.D., P.E., MBA is a Principal and Regional Manager at ECS, where he leads teams across six Mid-Atlantic offices and drives strategic growth through innovation, leadership, and emerging technologies. With a background spanning construction, engineering research, and consulting, Jigar specializes in building high-performing teams, developing new service lines, and leveraging artificial intelligence to transform the AEC industry. He is the creator of 3½ Things, a platform focused on AI, leadership, and differentiation, and is a sought-after speaker on the future of engineering, business strategy, and technology.

Contracts, Liability & Client Negotiation
Date: Tuesday, January 12, 2027

Speaker: Jennifer Beyerlein & Andrew Gabel

Contract language, scope, fee, schedule, liability, and client expectations are closely connected in real A/E practice. This session will help participants recognize common contract and project risk issues, understand when to escalate concerns, and practice how to communicate risk clearly with clients and internal leadership.

This session combines the most important content areas from contracts, liability, and negotiation into one practical session focused on risk recognition, communication, and client negotiation. The goal is not to turn participants into legal experts, but to help emerging leaders and project managers understand the clauses and situations that can create significant firm risk.

Participants will explore key contract concepts such as standard of care, indemnity, duty to defend, limitation of liability, scope clarity, payment terms, schedule obligations, additional services, documentation, and client-drafted agreements. The session will also address how project managers can raise concerns before issues become disputes and how to protect the firm while preserving strong client relationships.

Participants will explore:

- Standard of care
- Indemnity and duty to defend
- Limitation of liability
- Scope clarity and additional services
- Payment terms and schedule obligations
- Documentation and communication
- Client-drafted agreements
- Clauses or situations that should trigger escalation
- Strategies for negotiating scope, fee, schedule, and risk
- How to communicate concerns before issues become disputes

Interactive Component:
Contract Redline + Client Negotiation Role-Play — Participants review a short fictional client-drafted agreement or amendment with common A/E contract red flags, identify the highest-risk clauses, decide what should be escalated, and practice a client conversation focused on resolving concerns while maintaining the relationship

Meet Your Presenter
Jennifer McMillan Beyerlein is co-Leader of Ballard Spahr's Real Estate and Construction Litigation Group and focuses on construction litigation as well as drafting and negotiating complex construction contracts for design professionals, contractors, and private and public owners. Her experience includes representing architecture and engineering firms in malpractice claims and advising municipalities and other public owners on major public works projects, defending large claims involving issues such as tunneling, differing site conditions, and defective specifications. A trusted advisor in resolving disputes before litigation, she also represents owners, public entities, tribes, and design professionals in litigation and arbitration, and serves on the American Arbitration Association's Roster of Construction Arbitrators.

Andrew Gabel focuses his practice on representing design professionals, public and private owners, contractors, product manufacturers, and insurers in complex construction and real estate disputes. He has handled matters involving alleged design errors, differing site conditions, delay claims, cost overruns, lease disputes, and insurance coverage issues, and brings significant trial and arbitration experience to both construction and real estate matters. In addition to litigating, Andrew serves as a strategic advisor at all stages of a project and is involved in contract drafting and review for both design professionals and owners.

Talent Management & Performance Leadership

Date: Tuesday, February 9, 2027

Speaker: Kelly Hatfield + Amelia Ransom

Talent management is one of the most important business issues facing A/E firms. This session will focus on how leaders attract, retain, coach, and develop people in a competitive workforce.

The session will help participants understand that talent management is not only an HR function. It is a core leadership responsibility, especially for project managers, team leads, and future firm leaders. Participants will explore how talent strategy shows up in day-to-day leadership through coaching, feedback, accountability, performance conversations, retention, burnout, early-career development, and career pathing.

The session will move beyond HR policy and focus on the manager's role in creating high-performing, healthy, and accountable teams. Participants will practice how to have difficult conversations, give clear feedback, coach employees, support retention, and balance empathy with accountability.

Participants will explore:

- Hiring, onboarding, retention, and employee engagement
- Coaching and developing employees
- Early-career development and career pathing
- Performance conversations and accountability
- Giving feedback clearly and constructively
- Managing burnout and workload concerns
- Hybrid work expectations
- Developing future leaders
- Building accountability within teams
- The manager's role in creating healthy team culture

Interactive Component:

The High Performer Who Is Burning Out — Participants work through a scenario involving an overloaded project manager, an underdeveloped junior employee, and a demanding client. They must decide how to protect the employee, the client relationship, the project, and the firm.

Format: Extended session — approximately 4 hours with Kelly + 60-minute Inclusive Leadership as a Retention and Performance Strategy

Meet Your Presenters

Kelly Hatfield is the Founder and Managing Partner of Enginuity Advantage, a recruiting and leadership consulting firm serving the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry. With more than 25 years of experience in recruiting, human resources, and leadership development, she helps engineering and design firms attract, develop, and retain exceptional talent.

Kelly partners with firm owners and leadership teams on talent strategy, succession planning, organizational development, and employee engagement. Known for her practical and engaging approach, she draws on decades of experience to help leaders build high-performing teams and workplace cultures where people and businesses thrive.

Amelia Ransom, SPHR, is an accomplished HR and organizational leadership executive with more than 30 years of experience advancing workplace culture, leadership development, and inclusion. She previously served as Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Smartsheet and led the company's Corporate Social Responsibility efforts after developing Avalara's first DEI strategy. Amelia is also an active community leader, serving on the boards of several nonprofit organizations across the Seattle region.

Strategic Planning, Market Positioning & Advocacy

Date: Tuesday, March 9, 2027

Speaker: Steve Walker + Van Collins

Strategic planning is the foundation for how A/E firms make decisions about clients, markets, growth, staffing, resources, and long-term direction. This session will help participants understand how a strong strategic plan informs the work a firm pursues, the clients it prioritizes, the markets it invests in, and the opportunities it chooses to decline.

Participants will explore strategic planning fundamentals and tools for A/E firms, with a focus on how strategy supports resilient growth and disciplined decision-making. The session will also examine how leadership teams use the strategic plan to align priorities, resources, accountability, and business decisions.

By placing this session before Business Development & Strategic Marketing, participants will first build a foundation for how firms make strategic choices. This will allow the following session to go deeper into how firms position themselves, build client trust, and pursue work that aligns with their strategic goals.

The session will also include a 45-minute ACEC WA advocacy segment led by Van Collins. This portion will help participants understand how advocacy and public policy connect to firm strategy and the broader business environment for A/E firms.

Format: Extended session — approximately 4 hours with Steve Walker + 45-minute ACEC WA advocacy segment

Participants will explore:

- Strategic planning fundamentals and tools for A/E firms
- Strategic focus that supports resilient growth
- How a strategic plan informs client selection and client prioritization
- What work to pursue and what work to stop pursuing
- How leadership teams align priorities, resources, and accountability
- Strategic decision-making during uncertainty
- Practical examples that connect strategy to real A/E business decisions
- How strategy becomes the foundation for market positioning, business development, and client relationships
- Why advocacy matters to A/E firms
- How public policy affects firm strategy and project delivery
- QBS, procurement, infrastructure funding, workforce, liability, and regulatory issues
- ACEC WA's role in advocacy and how emerging leaders can engage

Interactive Component:
Strategic Decision Lab — Participants work through a fictional A/E firm scenario and evaluate how the firm's strategic plan should guide decisions about client priorities, market opportunities, resources, and risk.

Meet Your Presenter
Steve is the president of SR Walker and Associates, Inc., a professional services consulting firm founded in 2005 to provide strategic planning, marketing and management consulting. He has supported a diverse mix of over 70 A/E/C firms of all sizes, from a one-person start ups to some of the world's largest engineering, architectural and heavy civil construction companies. He has coached and supported management and marketing professionals around the world. Steve's experience includes strategic planning, development of market strategies, leadership of major sales pursuits, customer perception and image surveys, and more. He brings a 30 year foundation of professional engineering and construction management experience to his consulting practice.
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Business Development & Strategic Marketing
Date: Tuesday, April 13, 2027

Speaker: Adrienne Lindsey

Business development and marketing are most effective when they are connected to firm strategy. This session participants will learn how to develop a focused marketing and business development strategy, position your firm with clients, and create proposals that stand out. Through real-world examples and interactive exercises, participants will gain practical tools to improve their firms plan, position, and pursue work.

Participants will explore:

- Using marketing strategically to support business goals
- Positioning before opportunities arise
- Business development for technical professionals
- Proposal strategy and client-focused messaging
- Client interviews and presentation preparation
- Debriefs, follow-up, and client feedback loops
- Building client trust before, during, and after a project
- Communicating value instead of only qualifications
- Real A/E examples from both public-sector and private-sector work

Interactive Component:

Proposals That Win — Participants learn what evaluators are really looking for and why some proposals consistently rise to the top. Explore practical strategies to clearly communicate your team's understanding, value, and differentiation.

Meet Your Presenter

Adrienne Lindsey is a seasoned business development and marketing strategist with nearly 20 years of experience helping A/E/C firms to build relationships and grow. A skilled communicator and strategic thinker, Adrienne has led growth planning, pursuit development, and client engagement initiatives for consulting firms throughout the Pacific Northwest—translating technical expertise into winning stories that resonate with clients.

Through her consulting practice, ASCEND Growth Strategies, Adrienne now empowers growing firms to build visibility, develop effective marketing habits, and pursue work with confidence. Her workshop is grounded in SMPS best practices and real-world insights, making her a relatable and trusted guide for individuals looking to improve how they communicate, connect, and compete.

Executive Leadership Capstone: Lead the Firm Simulation
Date: Tuesday, May 4, 2027

Team presentations, panel feedback

The final CCP session will bring together the leadership, finance, ownership, technology, contracts, talent, strategy, marketing, and advocacy concepts covered throughout the program. Participants will apply what they have learned through an executive leadership simulation focused on a fictional A/E firm facing several real-world business challenges.

Approximately one month before the capstone, participants will receive a case packet describing a fictional firm. The firm may be facing issues related to profitability, project delivery, staffing, ownership transition, client communication, technology adoption, contract risk, market positioning, and strategic growth. Participants will work in teams to evaluate the firm's situation, identify the most important risks and opportunities, and develop leadership recommendations.

During the final session, teams will present their recommendations to a panel of ACEC Washington firm leaders, board members, or senior industry professionals. The panel will provide feedback and ask questions similar to what participants might experience in a real leadership or ownership setting. The capstone is designed to help participants practice executive-level thinking, communicate recommendations clearly, and connect the full CCP curriculum to real A/E firm leadership decisions.

Participants will apply concepts from:

- Leadership and team culture
- Finance and project profitability
- Ownership transition and shareholder value
- AI, digital delivery, and technology
- Contracts, liability, and client negotiation
- Talent strategy and performance leadership
- Strategic planning and market positioning
- Business development and client communication
- Advocacy and public policy

Intended Takeaway:

Participants will leave the program with a stronger understanding of how firm leaders evaluate complex business challenges, make strategic decisions, communicate priorities, and lead across multiple areas of firm performance.

Program Completion, Recognition & Make-Up Policy

IParticipants who complete the CCP program will earn 36 PDHs and will receive a completion diploma from ACEC Washington.

Completion recognition will take place at the **ACEC Washington Spring Conference**. Participants who attend all CCP sessions will receive a **complimentary registration to the Spring Conference**, where they will be recognized and presented with their completion diploma.
To be eligible for the complimentary Spring Conference registration, participants must attend **all CCP classes during the 2026–2027 cycle.**

Participants who miss one or more CCP classes may still complete the program and receive their diploma; however, they must make up any missed class during the next CCP cycle. **A $75 make-up fee per missed class will apply.** The make-up fee helps cover administrative, catering, and instructional costs associated with attending a future cycle session.

Participants who need to make up a class in the next CCP cycle will not be eligible for the complimentary Spring Conference registration in the current year. Once all missed classes are completed and all make-up fees are paid, the participant will be eligible to receive their CCP completion diploma.

ACEC Washington understands that unavoidable conflicts or emergencies may occur. Make-up class requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but all missed classes must be completed before a participant is considered to have completed the CCP program.