



2026-27

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERIES

Enrollment Limited To 24 Participants
Program Runs September 2026 - April 2027



Empowering People. **Strengthening Firms.**

The ACEC/MN Leadership Development Series is a powerful, career-shaping experience designed to benefit both high-performing individuals and the firms that support them.

Created for mid-career professionals already leading through projects, people, or initiatives, this seven-session program provides proven strategies for taking on expanded roles with confidence. It is designed for individuals ready to elevate their impact within their firms and across the industry.

Each session translates directly to the workplace—equipping participants to lead resilient teams, make smarter decisions, and deliver greater value to their firms. This is more than a leadership program. It's a career and business accelerator.

We welcome participants from all disciplines and roles within engineering firms.

What You'll Walk Away With

By the end of the program, each participant will have:

- Developed a Personal Leadership Plan grounded in their own values, strengths, and growth goals
- Built a Team Leadership Action Plan with specific strategies to reduce stress and increase engagement
- Created a Personal Business Development Plan with focused actions for the next 30–90 days
- Sharpened communication and negotiation skills through high-stakes, real-world practice
- Integrated practical AI tools and frameworks into daily leadership workflows
- Gained a working understanding of the legislative landscape shaping the engineering profession
- Built connections with peers and industry leaders who understand your challenges

Series Schedule

Sessions will be held at Grandview Lodge in Nisswa, West End Conference Center in St. Louis Park, the ACEC/MN Offices in St. Paul, and at the Minnesota State Capitol.

- **Sept 30 / Oct 1, 2026:** Maximizing Personal Leadership for Lasting Impact
- **October 21, 2026:** Personal Leadership Follow up
- **Nov 4, 2026:** Communications, Listening, and Negotiations
- **Dec 9, 2026:** AI-Enhanced Leadership
- **Jan 13, 2027:** Practical Business Development for Busy Leaders
- **Feb 3, 2027:** Workforce Trends and Engineering Talent
- **Mar 4, 2027:** Advocacy and Navigating the Legislative Process
- **Apr 7, 2027:** Leading Resilient and Engaged Teams

Application Process

Enrollment is limited to 24 participants and admission is competitive. Each applicant must have a sponsor from their firm who supports their full participation. Applicants name their sponsor on the application, and the sponsor will receive a separate form to confirm their commitment. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until all seats are filled.

Apply Today

Investment

\$4,500 members • \$7,500 non-members

Tuition includes seven in-person seminars, one virtual session, complimentary registration to an ACEC/MN ethics course, a seat at the 2027 Excellence in Engineering Gala (February 18, McNamara Alumni Center), and the May 22, 2027 Annual Meeting. Travel and accommodation are the responsibility of the firm.

Up to 40 Professional Development Hours.



Maximizing Personal Leadership for Lasting Impact

September 30/October 1, 2026

Grand View Lodge, Nisswa, MN

Day 1 – Team Building and Networking, 2pm – 5pm; Group Social Hour, 6:30pm

Day 2 – Maximizing Personal Leadership for Lasting Impact, 9am – 3pm

Each of us has the potential to lead with purpose and make a meaningful difference. This session is designed to help participants recognize their unique capacity for influence and take intentional steps toward a life of impact and legacy.

Grounded in the formula $\text{Life Impact} = \text{Competence} \times \text{Character} \times \text{Leadership Level}$, this course explores practical, relatable principles of personal leadership and human connection. Through engaging content and actionable tools, participants will gain insight into how they can strengthen their leadership presence, align their values with their actions, and make each day count—both professionally and personally.

Actionable Outcomes

- Understand how asking questions and practicing active listening fosters stronger relationships, increases employee engagement, and supports retention.
- Develop the ability to seek and consider others' perspectives, avoiding assumptions and premature conclusions in leadership decision-making.
- Recognize that consulting engineering is fundamentally a people-centered profession, requiring relational as well as technical skills.
- Explore how personal character and emotional health directly influence relational dynamics and, ultimately, organizational success—emphasizing the importance of internal growth and integrity in leadership.

Instructor

Jon Hauser received a degree in Electrical Engineer from North Dakota State University and a master's in religious education from Nazarene Theological Seminary. He worked as a high voltage substation engineer for 20 years for Burns and McDonnell and Ulteig Engineers. In 2011, Jon completed training as a founding member of the John Maxwell Team. His passion is to help people maximize their life impact.



Communications, Listening, and Negotiations

November 4, 2026

9am - 4pm

West End Conference Center, St. Louis Park, MN

Drawing from the high-stakes world of hostage negotiation, this session teaches powerful, real-world communication techniques that translate directly to leadership, team management, business development, and organizational change.

These principles are the ultimate foundation for building collaboration with internal and external partners, managing conflict, and creating clarity in executive decision-making for the participant and their firm. Whether you're leading through a tough conversation or guiding your team through change, this workshop gives you the tools to listen with purpose, lead with clarity, and influence with integrity.

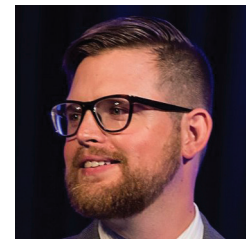
Note: Prior to the session, attendees will receive a customized video with a message from the instructor to give the participants ways to “pre-learn” and maximize the value of the session.

Actionable Outcomes

- Explore how listening, empathy, trust, and influence work together to drive effective leadership in modern consulting engineering firms.
- Rethink conflict and change as opportunities for growth, not roadblocks—using listening as the catalyst.
- Identify and overcome unproductive listening habits that undermine leadership and team cohesion.
- Learn and apply eight proven active listening techniques used by professional crisis negotiators.
- A customized plan for self-improvement over time for each participant.

Instructor

Dan Oblinger is a hostage negotiator, commander, author, international keynote speaker, and consulting business negotiator. He specializes in working with architects, engineers, and construction managers and is a graduate of the FBI National Crisis Negotiator Course in Quaniico. His books, **Life or Death Listening**, **The 28 Laws of Listening**, and **Negotiation Mythbusters**, are used in internal negotiations training programs across the AEC industry.



AI-Enhanced Leadership: Practical Tools & Techniques for Transformative Results

December 9, 2026

9am - 4pm

West End Conference Center, St. Louis Park, MN

AI has the potential to transform how leaders work—streamlining routine tasks, unlocking data-driven insights, and enhancing creative problem-solving. When leveraged mindfully, AI becomes more than a tool; it becomes a strategic thought partner in decision-making, planning, and innovation. This timely, hands-on workshop is designed to equip leaders with confidence, skillsets, and mindsets to integrate everyday AI into their professional workflows.

Through structured practice, tailored leadership examples, and the CRAFTing Framework, this session empowers leaders to improve decision-making, communication, and strategy through responsible AI use.

This session will include a Leader Roundtable featuring speakers from the consulting engineering field as well as professionals in other business areas who will discuss how AI is changing the way they lead and do business.

Actionable Outcomes

- Discover high-impact AI applications in leadership, planning, and communication.
- Identify and avoid common pitfalls that reduce AI effectiveness.
- Apply the Leadership CRAFTing Framework to generate more effective AI outputs.
- Explore leadership-specific prompt libraries designed to support everyday workflows.
- Practice with tools like Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, and Gemini through guided exercises.

Instructor

Tyler Moberg is an AI learning specialist and founder of Amplified Impact. He is a national trainer for The Bob Pike Group with nearly two decades of leadership and consulting experience helping professionals integrate AI tools thoughtfully and strategically. Tyler holds a master's degree in leadership from Bethel University.



Practical Business Development for Busy Leaders

January 13, 2027

9am - 2pm

West End Conference Center, St. Louis Park, MN

Most work in consulting engineering comes from existing clients, yet many leaders dread business development because it feels like selling. As expectations around growth increase, professionals are often left to figure it out on their own.

This hands-on session reframes business development as part of relationship-building and client service. Rather than traditional sales techniques, participants work with a small number of high-leverage behaviors that generate repeat work and new business through conversations already built into the job.

The session begins with a mindset shift from self-focused to client-centered, and moves quickly into realistic practice scenarios and individual planning.

Actionable Outcomes

- Develop a client-centered mindset that makes business development a natural part of the role, not a separate obligation.
- Apply a practical framework for prioritizing BD effort based on activities most likely to produce results.
- Use structured conversation techniques to identify and expand opportunities within current client relationships.
- Ask for referrals with confidence, using straightforward language that feels professional and not pushy.
- Reconnect with dormant client relationships using a low-pressure approach designed to restart the conversation.
- Build a Personal BD Plan with specific, realistic actions to complete within the next 30 to 90 days.

Instructor

Jim Rogers is a strategist and advisor focused on helping professional services firms build the client-facing capabilities that drive sustainable growth. He is the founder of the Seller-Doer Academy (a service of the Impellor Group), which has worked with AEC firms across the U.S. and Canada for 15 years. Jim is the author of **Becoming a Seller-Doer** and **Win More Work: How to Write Winning A/E/C Proposals** (ACEC, 2024). He holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is based in Lexington, Kentucky.



Workforce Trends and Engineering Talent

February 3, 2027

9am - 12 pm, Half day session followed by lunch

ACEC/MN Conference Center, St. Paul, MN

Minnesota's engineering workforce is shifting. Not gradually, structurally. This session cuts through the noise and puts real data in front of leaders, so they can stop reacting and start leading with clarity.

Participants will dig into the forces reshaping the labor market, demographic, regional, and economic, and walk away with a sharper lens for the decisions that actually matter: who's entering the workforce, who's leaving it, where the pressure points are, and how the best firms are responding.

The session unfolds in three parts:

- The Demographic Reality: labor force growth (and the lack of it), an aging profession, migration patterns, and why workforce conditions vary dramatically across Minnesota's regions
- The Engineering Labor Market: where demand is heading, what wage pressure really looks like, and who you're actually competing against for talent
- From Data to Decision: translating these trends into practical hiring and leadership strategy that works in the real world

Actionable Outcomes

- Read the demographic and labor market trends shaping Minnesota engineering and explain them to others.
- Pinpoint where consulting engineering is most exposed and most competitive.
- Tell the difference between a pipeline problem, a retention problem, and a market competition problem and be able to respond.
- Build a more strategic approach to talent for your team, your firm, and your own leadership.

Moderator

Megan Dayton is the CEO of ACEC Minnesota and a demographer by training. She spent nearly fifteen years at the Minnesota State Demographic Center producing the population, migration, and labor force projections used by state agencies and the Legislature for long-range planning. Her work tracked the demographic shifts now reshaping engineering: an aging workforce moving toward retirement, slower replacement at the entry level, and uneven geographic distribution of technical talent across the state. Dayton holds a PhD in organizational psychology, an MBA, a master's degree in applied demography from the Florida State University, and a public leadership credential from the Harvard Kennedy School. While her career has spanned multiple states and international settings, Minnesota is her home and where she has built the majority of her professional life.



Advocacy and Navigating the Legislative Process

March 4, 2027

9am - 2pm

ACEC/MN Conference Center and MN State Capitol, St. Paul, MN

Optional Capitol Tour scheduled

This interactive session equips consulting engineering professionals with the knowledge and tools to effectively engage in advocacy and navigate the legislative process at both state and federal levels. By clarifying how public policy is developed and enacted, participants will better understand how their expertise can influence decisions shaping the consulting engineering industry.

While technical skills and project execution remain central, the business of engineering is increasingly influenced by legislative and regulatory forces—impacting everything from funding and procurement to licensing and staffing. With the right insights, every engineer can advocate for their firm, clients, and community. Led by the ACEC/MN Advocacy Team, this session features firsthand perspectives from experienced advocates, state legislators, and association leaders.

Actionable Outcomes

- Understand how legislation is introduced, debated, and passed.
- Recognize the role of grassroots advocacy in advancing the profession.
- Explore major policy issues affecting engineering firms.
- Learn how to build relationships with lawmakers and influence policy.
- Participate in direct advocacy through Day at the Capitol and legislative meetings.

Instructor

David Schultz is Distinguished University Professor in the Departments of Political Science, Environmental Studies, and Legal Studies at Hamline University. A four-time Fulbright scholar and winner of the Leslie A. Whittington national award for excellence in public affairs teaching, David is the author of more than 45 books and 200+ articles on American politics, election law, and the media. He is regularly quoted in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, and NPR.



Leading Resilient and Engaged Teams

April 7, 2027

West End Conference Center, St. Louis Park, MN

Part 1 – Leading Resilient and Engaged Teams, 9am – 1:30pm

Economic uncertainty, AI disruption, and the ongoing effects of the pandemic continue to drive high stress and low well-being among workplace teams. This program weaves together new research, stories, and case studies, providing easy-to-implement strategies to help leaders identify the root causes of disengagement and cultivate resilient, thriving cultures.

Frameworks are presented as TNTs (tiny noticeable things)—reinforcing that strong teams are built on small, consistent shifts in mindset and practice. Participants leave with a workbook and action plan.

Part 2 – Management to Leadership Panel, 2pm – 4pm

A candid panel discussion featuring firm owners and senior leaders, designed specifically for mid-career professionals navigating the transition from manager to leader.

Actionable Outcomes

- Identify the six core causes of team stress and disengagement, and learn strategies to address each to support team resilience.
- Apply the ABCs of intrinsic motivation—autonomy, belonging, and challenge—to cultivate a more engaged and energized team.
- Use “sticky” recognition practices that foster a culture of appreciation, connection, and psychological safety.
- Leverage the Active Constructive Responding framework to deepen team connection and morale through meaningful celebration of wins.

Instructor

Paula Davis, JD, MAPP, is the founder and CEO of the Stress & Resilience Institute, where she has spent over 15 years helping leaders reduce burnout and build resilient, thriving teams. A former practicing attorney, she earned her master's in applied positive psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. Paula is the author of **Beating Burnout at Work** and **Lead Well**, both recognized by the Next Big Idea Club. She has delivered programs at Harvard Law, Stanford, and Wharton Executive Education, and her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*.





For more information, visit acecmn.org or email ksmeltzer@acecmn.org