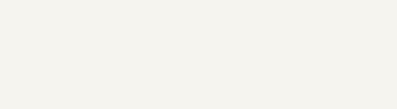


PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

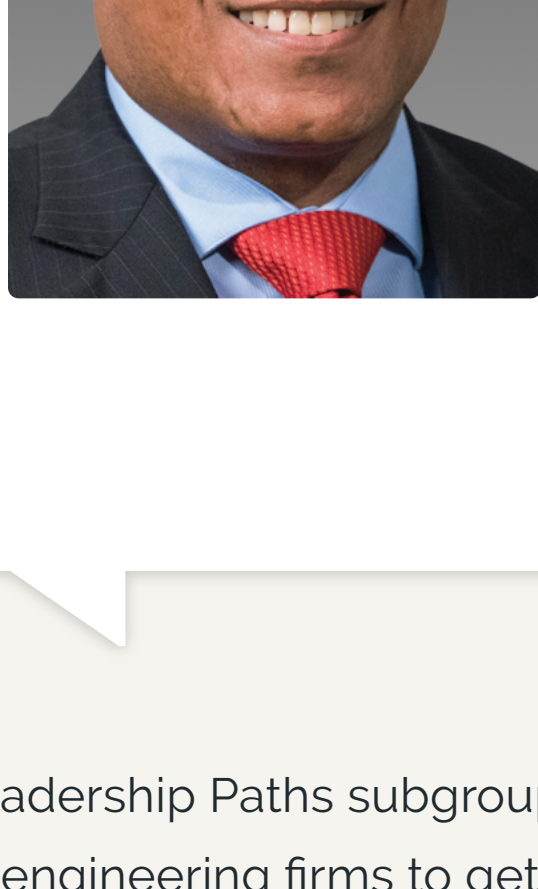
Beth Braverman | October 24, 2024



How ACEC can help engineer your leadership development.

While ACEC membership provides myriad advantages for engineers, those who choose to become leaders can realize even more benefits—from an expanded network to the development of skills that can help propel their career.

That's why ACEC's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEI&B) Committee launched the Leadership Paths subgroup, with a focus on helping member firm employees take their career paths to the next level. For its first initiative, the group has created a welcome packet and infographics for new members that outline the various paths to ACEC leadership—no matter where they are in their career.



“There will always be a gap in leadership development if you don't have people to pull from. If you don't have a farm team, nobody is ever going to play in the majors.”

ERIC MADDEN
VICE CHAIR, DEI&B COMMITTEE
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, JMT

“When I first started as an executive at ACEC/PA, it was always hard to get people involved in ACEC because they had preconceived notions that it was an executives' club or only for certain people at the firm,” says Eric Madden, vice chair of the DEI&B Committee and chief marketing officer of JMT. “That couldn't be further from the truth.”

Madden says the goal of the

Leadership Paths subgroup is to encourage engineers, surveyors, and others involved in the business of engineering firms to get involved with the organization. Over time, that will create a more robust and diverse pipeline of future leaders.

“There will always be a gap in leadership development if you don't have people to pull from,” Madden says. “If you don't have a farm team, nobody is ever going to play in the majors.”



“[It] gave me a greater understanding not only of how businesses run but also who I was. I became much more self-aware.”

DAN LARSON
FORMER MEMBER
ACEC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
CEO, AMERICAN ENGINEERING TESTING

Meeting Members Where They Are

The best path to leadership for a given engineer will depend on their career level, their areas of interest, and their future goals. Young professionals, for example, might consider serving on

Member Organization committees or developing their skills by taking the three-day Business of Design Consulting class, while midcareer professionals might enroll in the Pathways to Executive Leadership program to prepare themselves for new management roles within their firm while building a network of peers in similar positions. Meanwhile, senior leaders might serve on ACEC's national board or commit to the 18-month Senior Executives Institute program, which gives them the opportunity to connect not only with other senior engineering executives but also with policymakers and both public and private sector clients.

Voyage Of Self-Discovery

There's no time like the present.

Dan Larson, former member of the ACEC Executive Committee and CEO of American Engineering Testing (AET), didn't get involved with ACEC until he started moving up the leadership track at his company. The CEO at the time advised him to check out the organization. His first leadership role at ACEC was in 2004 as a director of ACEC/MN, and by 2018 he had made his way up through the ranks to president. He also completed the Senior Executives Institute program in 2021.

“Not every decision is unanimous, so it's learning how to maneuver and manage when there's a split decision.”

KURT YOSHII
NATIONAL DIRECTOR, ACEC CALIFORNIA
PRINCIPAL GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER
NINYO & MOORE GEOTECHNICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES CONSULTANTS

“I wish I had done the program 10 or 15 years earlier,” Larson says. “It really opened my eyes to the world beyond AET and the state of Minnesota and gave me a greater understanding not only of how businesses run but also who I was. I became much more self-aware.”

A Mutually Beneficial Relationship

Among those engineers who have taken on leadership roles within ACEC, there's a strong appreciation for the personal growth and career development they've gained in the process. Here's what they say are the biggest benefits:

For Kurt Yoshii, national director of ACEC California and principal geotechnical engineer at Ninyo & Moore Geotechnical & Environmental Sciences Consultants, a major benefit has been seeing firsthand how boards handle disagreements to reach a consensus.

“There's a lot of benefit to be able to go to a conference or pick up the phone and call a CEO at another company that does what I do. I can ask how they're handling a situation and gain perspective on solutions.”

ROBIN GREENLEAF
ACEC CHAIR EMERITUS
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF ARCHITECTURAL RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
IMEG

“Not every decision is unanimous,” he says. “so it's learning how to maneuver and manage when there's a split decision.”

One of the greatest advantages of ACEC membership is building a network of other executives at engineering firms throughout the country, says Robin Greenleaf, ACEC chair emeritus and executive vice president of architectural relations and strategic partnerships at IMEG.

Beyond personal career development, taking on a leadership role with ACEC also has an upside for member firms, says Chris Anderson, national director for ACEC-Montana and president and chairman of the board at DJ&A. For example, recent advocacy work by ACEC around repealing the research and development amortization requirement benefits both the industry and firms like Anderson's.

“When you identify the commonalities between the industry's needs and your firm's needs, a more compelling argument is created for dedicating the necessary time to be involved with ACEC.”

CHRIS ANDERSON
NATIONAL DIRECTOR, ACEC-MONTANA
PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
DJ&A

“When you identify the commonalities between the industry's needs and your firm's needs, a more compelling argument is created for dedicating the necessary time to be involved with ACEC,” he says.

Clearing The Path

Early in his career, Mike Cooper, vice chair of the DEI&B Committee and president of HED, had

mentors who encouraged him to become involved with ACEC. He joined Leadership Paths to help reach engineers who don't have that kind of encouragement.

“Not everyone has someone in their firm who has been in the organization already and can show them the ropes,” Cooper says. “So we wanted to clear the path so that everyone can participate and be comfortable and knowledgeable about how to get involved—without being overwhelmed or intimidated by the larger organization.”

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MIKE COOPER
VICE CHAIR, DEI&B COMMITTEE
PRESIDENT, HED

Engineers can also find inspiration in the success of Mugdha Tipnis, Mid-Atlantic South transportation leader and senior vice president at WSP. She started attending ACEC/MW meetings over 12 years ago to connect with clients and other engineers in the region. Tipnis, past chair and national director of the Member Organization, immediately saw the value of ACEC.

“It really felt like a place

where I belonged, a place where I could be successful and grow,” she says. “I wasn't just some young member coming in—there was a true interest in hearing my ideas and thoughts.”

With a supportive network and useful resources, ACEC helps engineers at every stage of their career find their leadership path to achieve their fullest potential.

“[ACEC] really felt like a place where I belonged, a place where I could be successful and grow.”

MUGDHA TIPNIS
PAST CHAIR AND NATIONAL DIRECTOR, ACEC/MW
MID-ATLANTIC SOUTH TRANSPORTATION LEADER
AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, WSP

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ARTICLE

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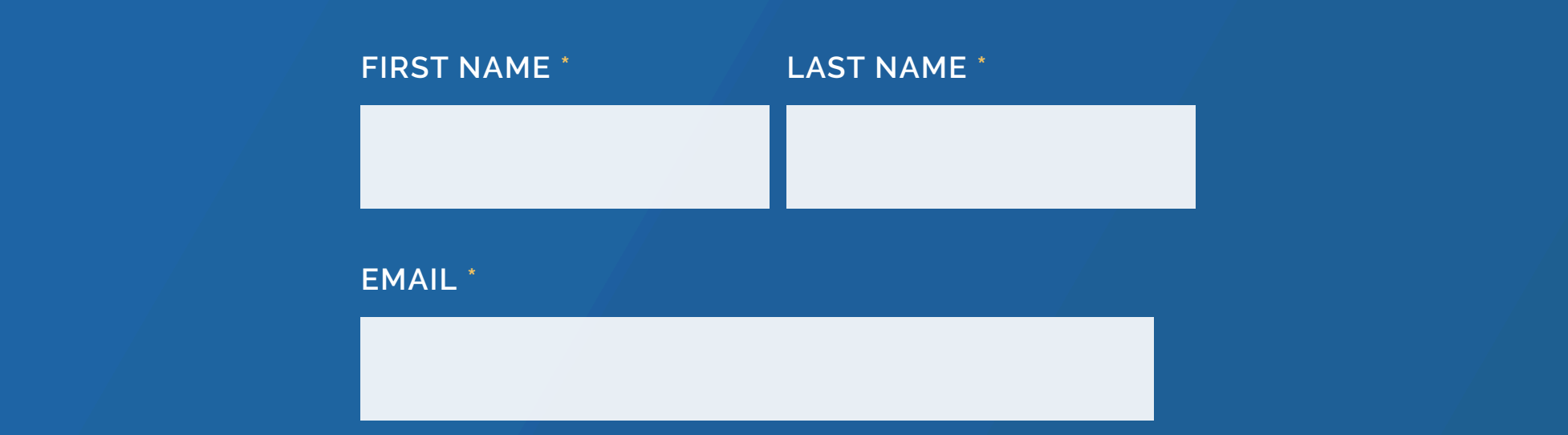
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