

## Executive Summary

The **2026–2029 ACEC Ohio Advocacy Plan** is a forward-looking, three-year strategy designed to advance public safety, infrastructure reliability, and the long-term health of Ohio’s engineering profession. Recognizing that meaningful policy change rarely occurs in a single legislative session, this plan emphasizes sustained education, strategic legislative engagement, and strong partnerships across government and industry.

ACEC Ohio’s advocacy approach is **education-first, bipartisan, and solutions-oriented**. Committee engagement and stakeholder education will remain continuous throughout the three-year cycle, while legislative efforts will be pursued deliberately—when conditions are right and outcomes can be achieved. Progress will be reviewed annually to ensure flexibility, accountability, and alignment with long-term goals.

The plan is built around **four core advocacy pillars**:

### **Protect and Strengthen Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) Across Ohio**

ACEC Ohio will work to ensure consistent compliance with QBS statutes at both the state and local levels. Advocacy efforts will reinforce the principle that professional engineering services must be selected based on qualifications—not low price—to protect public safety, manage risk, and deliver long-term value to taxpayers.

### **Secure Long-Term Infrastructure Funding**

Reliable, multi-year infrastructure funding is essential to workforce stability, efficient project delivery, and cost-effective asset management. ACEC Ohio will advocate for predictable, inflation-responsive transportation and infrastructure funding while supporting policies that align capital investment with Ohio’s long-term economic and public-safety needs.

### **Advance Procurement and Contracting Reform**

ACEC Ohio will promote procurement and contracting practices that reflect the realities of professional engineering services, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, and support fair, market-based compensation structures. This includes addressing outdated contract models, rate caps, and regulatory hurdles that undermine project outcomes.

### **Strengthen the Engineering Workforce Pipeline**

Ohio’s ability to deliver infrastructure projects and safeguard public welfare depends on a strong, licensed engineering workforce. ACEC Ohio will defend professional licensure standards, promote policies that grow engineering enrollment and in-state retention, and support workforce development initiatives that value education, experience, and public responsibility.

Through these four pillars, ACEC Ohio will continue to serve as a trusted resource to legislators, agencies, and partners—advocating for policies that protect the public, invest wisely in infrastructure, and sustain the engineering profession for future generations.

# 2026-2029 ACEC Ohio Advocacy Plan V4 1.22.26

## Protect & Strengthen QBS Across Ohio

### Problem Statement

All public agencies in Ohio do not consistently utilize Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) to procure professional engineering services.

### Goals

- Achieve full QBS compliance at state and local levels, select most qualified not best price.
- Eliminate fee-first and low-bid professional services selection recognizing engineering services are not a commodity.

### Actions

#### Education

- Ongoing education of legislators on the value and legal basis of QBS.
- Educate legislators, state agencies, local public agencies and ACEC Ohio members on the risks of fee-first procurement (quality, liability, lifecycle cost).
- Work with public agencies and associations to hold training sessions on QBS requirements.

#### Legislation

- Seek an increase to the \$50,000 QBS threshold with escalator language.
- Advocate for legislative clarification reinforcing QBS applicability to home-rule and charter cities. (health, safety and welfare argument)
- Consider transparency requirements or reporting related to QBS compliance.
- Advocate for statutory or policy updates prohibiting fee-based professional services selection.

#### Committee

- Update and share ACEC Ohio's website portal with access QBS resources and templates.
- Create a warning/reporting mechanism for firms to flag QBS violations.
- Identify LPA's that can speak to benefits of QBS.
- Revisit talking-point brochures, educational materials and website explaining why QBS improves outcomes. Create messaging on the "Simple" QBS process to public agencies – to gain compliance.
- Publish and promote success stories from municipalities using QBS effectively

# Secure Long-Term Infrastructure Funding

## Problem Statement

Infrastructure funding is inconsistent, creating workforce instability, inefficiencies, and higher long-term public costs.

## Goals

- Ensure predictable, multi-year capital commitments for infrastructure funding.
- Promote transportation funding increases that reflect real costs and accounts for inflation.

## Actions

### Education

- Educate legislators, gubernatorial candidates and stakeholders on the impacts of funding volatility.
- Educational initiatives that inform stakeholders about the economic value, public safety implications, and long-term reliability benefits of infrastructure investment; include available data-driven cost-benefit analyses and infrastructure condition reports.

### Legislation

- Advocate for inflation-adjusted transportation and infrastructure funding formulas.
- Support increases to the motor vehicle users fee or equivalent revenue mechanisms.
- Monitor property tax reform legislation and weigh in as necessary when impacts to local capital funding.

### Committee / Coalition

- Continue participation in coalitions with municipalities, counties, MPOs, chambers, and industry groups such as FOR (Fix Our Roads) Ohio.
- Support ODOT in advancing long-term financing tools (bonding flexibility, alternative funding).
- Encourage alignment of long-term asset management plans with capital improvement programs for local agencies.
- Create as needed educational pieces on infrastructure funding for members to share.

# **Advance Procurement & Contracting Reform**

## **Problem Statement**

Current procurement and contracting practices across state and local agencies are inconsistent, administratively burdensome, and often misaligned with the realities of professional engineering services.

## **Goals**

- Reduce administrative burden on firms and agencies.
- Align contract structures and compensation with market realities.

## **Actions**

### **Education**

- Educate legislators, state agencies and local public agencies on best practices for lump-sum, time-and-materials, and change-order management.
- Engage Ohio's congressional delegation on federal FAR reforms related to overhead, labor, and talent costs.

### **Legislation**

- Monitor and respond to state-level procurement statutes impacting professional services contracts.

### **Committee**

- Establish best practice information and/or templates for member companies on contract terms and conditions, lump-sum usage, invoicing requirements and change order processes.
- Review ACEC Ohio State Procurement Resource Guide for updating and educational distribution.
- Review the use of rate caps among member firm clients and pursue their removal.

# Strengthen the Engineering Workforce Pipeline

## Problem Statement

There is a shortage of qualified engineers driven by declining enrollment, retirements, competition for talent, and challenges in attracting and retaining workers. At the same time, increasing misunderstandings and challenges to professional licensure threaten public safety, workforce quality, and the long-term sustainability of the profession.

## Goals

- Grow the number of engineering graduates.
- Protect professional licensure (PE/PS) requirements.

## Actions

### Education

- Ongoing education of legislators on the value of professional licensure and need for talent in Ohio.
- Provide data-driven evidence demonstrating the engineering workforce shortage and the economic value of the business of engineering.
- Promote federal immigration-based talent solutions, including expansion of the H-1B visa program, alongside state-level incentive strategies to strengthen the in-state workforce.

### Legislation

- Defend statutory licensure requirements against erosion.
- Advocate for student loan repayment or tuition assistance for engineering graduates who commit to working in Ohio.
- Explore inclusion of Civil Engineering and related disciplines in Ohio's STEM relocation tax credit program (up to \$15,000 per relocating employee in targeted industries).
- Monitor legislative and regulatory proposals affecting licensure and workforce development.
- Ensure full funding of tech cred program in FY 27-28 Biennial Budget.

### Committee

- Coordinate with universities, workforce boards, and professional societies.
- Push for inclusion of engineering internships and co-op programs in state-funded workforce initiatives.