

# IOWA ENGINEERING CONFERENCE

MAY 20-21, 2026  
MARRIOTT - WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

## FULL SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

### 8:00 Registration

### 8:30-9:30 The Workforce of the Future Economic Outlook for Engineering Firms

**Presenter: Joe Bates, Senior Research Consultant, ACEC Research Institute**

Get critical insights from the latest ACEC Research Institute data to inform your firm's strategic planning. Joe Bates will share key findings from the 2025 Economic Assessment and newly released Q2 Engineering Business Sentiment study, including:

- Industry snapshot: Revenue projections and contributions to GDP, jobs, taxes and wages
- Market forces: Tariff impacts, remaining IIJA funding, and tax policy implications
- Key challenges: Labor shortages, construction trends, and end-market opportunities
- Member outlook: Latest sentiment data on firm confidence and emerging concerns

Whether you're planning workforce investments, evaluating market expansion, or refining business strategy, this session delivers data-driven intelligence you firm needs to navigate today's economic environment.

### 9:30-9:50 Break

### 9:50-11:00 AI Resilience

**Presenter: Jay Margherio, The Environmental Financial Group**

AI is quickly moving from experimentation to expectation in AEC, and the firms that respond thoughtfully will shape the next era of delivery and client trust. In this session, Jay Margherio, Vice President of Technology and Innovation at EFCG, will explore where generative AI is beginning to make a meaningful impact in AEC firms and what that may mean over the next few years as adoption accelerates. The conversation will focus on the practical questions leaders are wrestling with: what is likely to change first, what is unlikely to change soon, and how firms can respond to questions from both clients and employees about how AI is being used. The session will leave ample time for discussion and audience questions, with an emphasis on practical takeaways participants can apply in their own organizations.

## **11:00 -12:00 Building the Engineering Workforce of 2035**

**Presenter: Joe Bates, Senior Research Consultant, ACEC Research Institute**

The engineering industry is confronting one of the most significant workforce challenges in its history. This session will present new findings from the recent Firm of the Future study on Workforce, which combines national demographic data and original research to provide a comprehensive view of the engineering talent pipeline. In addition to demographic analysis, the session will highlight insights from a national survey of engineering firms, students, and professionals across career stages. Findings reveal how motivations, career expectations, and employer perceptions vary across generations and between engineers and non-engineers within the firm.

Whether you're refining recruitment strategies, building mentorship systems, or planning succession, this session delivers the workforce intelligence your firm needs to attract, develop, and retain engineering talent in an increasingly competitive market

## **12:00-1:00 LUNCH**

### **1:00-1:45 The State of Engineering in Iowa**

- Report on Iowa DOT and ACEC Partnering Council – Dave Moeller and Patrick Kueter
- ACEC Transportation Committee – Dan Fullerton
- Legislative Update – Dave Scott
- DOGE Report – Impact on Engineering – Terry Lutz
- Update on ACEC/IDNR Committee – Steve Thompson
- Proposed Changes in Licensure to prevent Fraud – Jen Bennett
- Update on ACEC Iowa QBS promotion – Bryan Bross

## **1:45-2:00 BREAK**



## **2:00-5:00 The Mentally Strong Leader: Strategies for Resilience During Uncertain Times**

**Presenter: Brenda Clarke Hamilton, Fresh Coffee**

Today's engineering leaders are facing uncertain and often changing times. This engaging session focuses on how leaders can become consistently mentally strong in order to face these challenges with a quiet confidence that says, "I can face whatever is thrown my way." Using compelling research and real-life examples. This program will provide participants with practical, take-home strategies for remaining positive, level-headed, and assured; truly the type of leader up to the task of leading their people through whatever the future holds.

Brenda Clarke Hamilton is a dynamic keynote speaker who offers fresh perspectives in leadership, communication, team building, change management, and offering one's personal best to every facet of life. A highly-regarded conference speaker and audience favorite, Brenda speaks at approximately 100 events each year, in every industry imaginable. Audiences are quick to note Brenda's sense of humor, in-depth knowledge, high energy, and skill at keeping them engaged.

## **5:00 Reception with Engineering Excellence Dinner at 6:00**

**Thursday, May 21, 2026**

## **8:30-12:00 Evolving Your Business and Practice Models: How Net New Value Drives Next Level Success**

**Presenter: Peter C. Atherton, P.E., President, ActionsProve, LLC**

There is a lot of discussion about the need to evolve our business models from "hourly" to more value based - but what exactly does that mean, what steps are needed, and how quickly must we get there? The answers rest in how we think about, advance, and deliver the value we produce: our "practice" model.

In this advanced strategy session, you will learn:

- Why our ability to create "net new value" in the currency of next-level success
- Where the most pressure exists, and where most firms get stuck

The role leadership, ownership, "first principles", AI, and ACEC advocacy can play in positioning your firm for greater success.

Peter C. Atherton, PE. is an author, speaker, independent researcher, podcast host, and President and Founder of ActionsProve, LLC with over 30 years of AEC experience. ActionsProve works with AEC leaders and organizations nationwide to grow and advance their success through new focused strategic firm design and planning, next-level leadership development, and outside board advisory. Prior to founding ActionsProve and for more than two decades, Pete was a very successful and accomplished professional civil engineer and major firm owner. Pete now focuses on helping high-achieving leaders and organizations grow and prosper in this new era of uncertainty and opportunity. Learn more at [www.ActionProve.com](http://www.ActionProve.com).

