

Strategic Compass: 2026 Edition



“ADVANCING TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE”



UNITED STATES SOCIETY ON DAMS

www.USSDams.org

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INTRODUCTION

The United States Society on Dams (USSD) is historically steeped in technical excellence with it being one of the original members of International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD). USSD is dedicated to advancing the role of levee systems and tailings and water dams (collectively referenced as “Dams” throughout the remainder of this document) and building the community of practice.

Our members are professionals who advance the environmentally sustainable science of planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance of Dams and associated civil engineering infrastructure. They lead initiatives throughout the nation and work with partner organizations worldwide to resolve the world’s critical resource challenges including water supply, hydropower, sustainable mine waste storage and flood control.



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USSD'S STRATEGIC EVOLUTION

ANCHORING FOR GROWTH AND EXCELLENCE

As part of the strategic planning process, the Board of Directors engaged in facilitated discussions to explore three potential strategic “anchors” aligned with USSD’s mission, vision and values. While these anchors are not mutually exclusive, identifying a primary anchor helps guide strategic decisions—serving as a “tiebreaker” for investments, staffing, resource allocation and budgeting.

The three strategic anchors considered were:

- **Relationship-Centered Engagement** – Ensuring the quality and longevity of relationships and experiences with members and industry partners.
- **Operational Excellence** – The ability to operate efficiently and consistently, while sustaining and scaling USSD’s growth.
- **Technical Leadership** – Delivering trusted and authoritative technical information in the industry through innovative approaches.

Historically, USSD’s strength has been rooted in relationships—with members, partners and organizations like ICOLD. This relationship-centered approach will remain the primary strategic anchor through the 2026–2029 strategic plan. It reflects USSD’s current capabilities and provides a stable platform for continued success

Consistent with the USSD founding principles, the Board of Directors selected Technical Leadership as the long-term (2030+) primary anchor, recognizing that all three anchors are important and will be used to guide USSD’s direction. The 2026-2029 Strategic Plan is designed to maintain USSD’s relationship-centered engagement as we transition to the primary anchor of technical excellence beginning in 2030.

Aligned with the third strategic anchor, USSD aspires to be recognized as “a trusted source for innovative, authoritative technical information, delivered through industry-leading approaches.” This vision is captured in the tagline: “Advancing Technical Excellence.”

Looking ahead, USSD will continue to support its members and operate efficiently while scaling for future growth. The Board envisions strengthening USSD’s historic offerings and evolving into a leading provider of technical expertise for the industry and broader community of practice. Achieving this vision will require:

1. *A cultural shift toward greater reliance on accountable volunteers and strategic board guidance for content development.*
2. *Expansion of staff capacity, including hiring paid personnel to support technical committees and program delivery.*

STRATEGIC COMPASS ELEMENTS

To encapsulate USSD's organizational expectations, the Board has developed a tagline and updated the mission, vision and value statements. Together they encapsulate our intention to continue our evolution as a premier, trusted source for innovative, authoritative technical information for the Dam industry, delivered through industry-leading approaches.

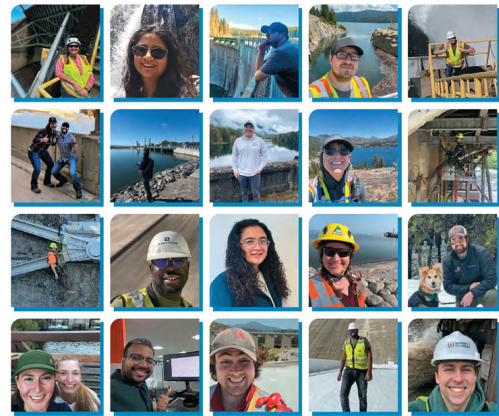
All of these elements will be brought to life by being shared widely through different means of communication (e.g., newsletters, website, white papers, etc.). The intention is for all stakeholders within USSD (e.g., members, sponsors, strategic partners, staff, board of directors, etc.) to clearly understand USSD's purpose and strategic direction..

TAGLINE: “ADVANCING TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE”

MISSION: Advancing the practice of Dams through collaboration and advocacy to support safe, equitable and sustainable solutions.

VISION: A world where Dams provide their intended benefits to the communities they serve and are managed responsibly, safely and securely.

VALUE STATEMENTS:



USSD is a values-driven organization. Our values serve as a compass – guiding our decisions, actions and direction as we navigate challenges, pursue our mission and realize our vision.

Our Values Are:

- 1. Technical Authority:** *We provide innovative, trusted technical information and expertise in the industry.*
- 2. Industry Champion:** *We advocate for the vital role and importance of Dams in society.*
- 3. Member Empowerment:** *We are dedicated to fulfilling the needs of our members and stakeholders, creating value through meaningful engagement, support and service.*
- 4. Effective Communication:** *We foster open, honest and inclusive communication with our members and stakeholders; ensuring that their voices are heard and valued.*
- 5. Operational Excellence:** *We strive for efficiency, consistency and scalability to support sustainable growth and long-term impact.*
- 6. Innovative Delivery:** *We continuously improve how we deliver services, knowledge and experiences – embracing new ideas, approaches and technologies to better serve our members and stakeholders.*

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Strategic imperatives are designed to be easy-to-remember ways to represent foundational elements in living our mission, vision and value statements for USSD’s strategy. The five strategic imperatives identified by the Board are *Operate, Educate, Advocate, Collaborate, and Cultivate*. These are elements in USSD’s Strategic Plan that persist year after year since they are designed to never be complete; we work on them perpetually.

Our Strategic Imperatives Are:

OPERATE: Ensure USSD’s Solvency and Sustainability

Ensure USSD’s long-term sustainability through diversified revenue, strategic partnerships, data-informed decision making, and disciplined financial oversight.

EDUCATE: Deliver Technical Excellence

Continuously provide trusted and authoritative technical solutions. Remain committed to leading the industry by delivering high-quality technical resources, advancing professional development and driving innovation that supports safe and sustainable future of Dams.

COLLABORATE: Strengthen Relationships

Continuously build networks and relationships to strengthen the community of practice. Strategically collaborate with ICOLD and targeted international and national professional organizations in the Dam industry.

CULTIVATE: Strengthen Organizational Capacity and Member Engagement

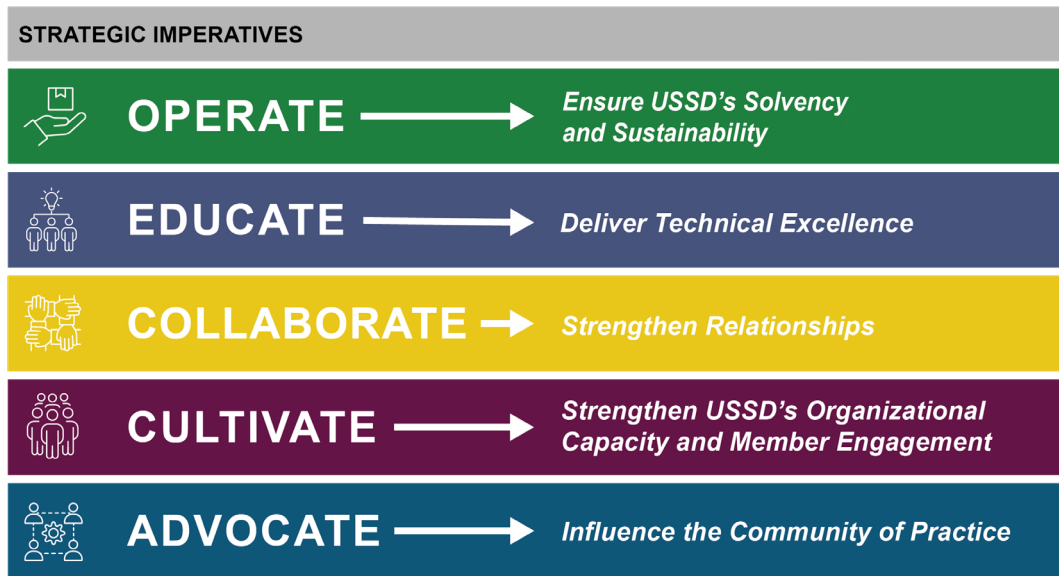
Develop leadership capacity and enhance member engagement through targeted initiatives that foster growth, participation, and community. Enhance engagement through targeted initiatives that support leadership development, professional growth and meaningful participation – ensuring our community thrives and grows.

ADVOCATE: Influence the Community of Practice

Be an industry champion, advocating for the vital role and importance of Dams in society. Strive to influence practitioners and policymakers by promoting leading practices, innovative solutions and the value of sustainable, resilient infrastructure that protects communities.



STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES



2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Objectives:

1. Expand & Diversify Revenue Streams
2. Optimize Financial & Budgetary Operations
3. Enhance Financial Oversight

Internal Contributors:

- Board: Treasurer
- Committees: Finance, Education and Training, Annual Conference Coordinating

Strategies:

- Identify and implement new sustainable revenue streams to reduce reliance on traditional sources.
- Optimize existing revenue streams by improving pricing models, increasing participation, and enhancing cost efficiency.
- Establish a financial performance dashboard to monitor revenue diversification and support board-level strategic oversight.

Activities:

- Develop and execute a structured, phased process to identify, pilot, and scale new sustainable revenue streams.
- Strengthen existing revenue streams through pricing optimization and cost management.
- Build and maintain a financial performance dashboard to monitor revenue diversification.

2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



EDUCATE → *Deliver Technical Excellence*

Objectives:

1. Develop and Maintain Diversified Educational Program
2. Expand Technical Resources
3. Enhance Accessibility of Technical Resources

Internal Contributors:

- Board: Secretary
- Committees: Education & Training (with support from other Technical Committees), Emerging Professionals, Finance

Strategies:

- Maintain a robust and flexible training program that includes in-person, hybrid, and on-demand learning options.
- Publish technical resources, including peer-reviewed papers and guidelines, to advance industry knowledge.
- Digitize and centralize technical documentation to create a unified knowledge hub for members.

Activities:

- Develop and maintain a diversified training program across multiple delivery formats.
- Develop and publish high-priority technical resources through a structured review process.
- Develop and implement a system to digitize and centralize technical documentation.



COLLABORATE → *Strengthen Relationships*

Objectives:

1. Strengthen Committee Engagement & Coordination
2. Strengthen Partnerships that Advance USSD's Mission

Internal Contributors:

- Board: President; Vice President (with support from Board Liaisons)
- Committees: ICOLD Engagement (with support from other Technical Committees)

Strategies:

- Create a structured system for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and collaborative opportunities through digital platforms, resource libraries, and periodic cross-committee updates.

2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Create and launch a structured process for reviewing all current and past MOUs to ensure alignment with USSD’s strategic priorities and organizational goals.

Activities:

- Build and maintain a centralized knowledge-sharing system for committees.
- Develop and implement a standardized process for selecting, writing, executing, and monitoring USSD MOUs.



CULTIVATE → *Strengthen USSD’s Organizational Capacity and Member Engagement*

Objectives:

1. Enhance the overall value of USSD membership
2. Grow a more diversified Membership
3. Strengthen ICOLD Leadership & Engagement
4. Improved Member Feedback

Internal Contributors:

- Board: President; Vice President
- Committees: ICOLD Engagement; ICOLD 2031 Bid Taskforce; Emerging Professionals; DEI; Advocacy & Awareness; Annual Conference Coordinating

Strategies:

- Design and implement at least one new engagement initiative annually to strengthen member value.
- Design communications and tools to expand USSD membership through targeted outreach, tailored engagement pathways, and value-driven participation opportunities.
- Clearly communicate the value of engagement in ICOLD activities while actively increasing USSD representation in ICOLD and INCA activities.
- Establish mechanisms to gather and act on member feedback, ensuring engagement strategies remain relevant and impactful.

Activities:

- Establish and launch a structured process to identify, evaluate, and implement new engagement initiatives.
- Develop and communicate clear opportunities to increase USSD representation and presence within ICOLD and INCA activities.
- Implement ongoing membership feedback system to connect member feedback to organizational strategies.

2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



ADVOCATE → *Influence the Community of Practice*

Objectives:

1. Improve Public Awareness and Outreach
2. Establish Coordinated Legislative Advocacy Efforts
3. Increase Student Engagement & Foster Industry Growth

Internal Contributors:

- Board: Vice President, Immediate Past President
- Committees: Advocacy & Awareness, Emerging Professionals, DEI

Strategies:

- Develop and implement tools to support and empower participation in advocacy efforts.
- Develop systems to monitor and analyze legislation and policy developments in collaboration with other organizations.
- Collaborate with academic institutions and professional organizations to integrate Dam-related content into engineering curricula and launch initiatives that position Dam engineering as a vital and rewarding career path.

Activities:

- Create and maintain branded, easy-to-use social media toolkits that enable leaders, members, and partners to consistently share and amplify advocacy messages.
- Establish a structured policy monitoring and response system to guide timely advocacy actions.
- Develop and implement academic partnership pathways to integrate dam-related content into engineering programs.



ANNUAL REFRESH

Reviewing USSD’s strategic compass on a regular basis is essential to ensure the organization remains agile and responsive in a rapidly evolving industry. The Board is committed to formally reviewing—and updating as needed—the strategic compass each year. This annual review reinforces accountability and ensures USSD’s priorities remain relevant and impactful.

Benefits to USSD include:

- **Adaptation to Change:** Annual reviews allow USSD to quickly respond to emerging opportunities, industry trends, and challenges.
- **Alignment:** Ensures strategic goals remain aligned with USSD’s mission, vision, and values, preventing drift in focus.
- **Flexibility:** Provides a clear framework for decision-making during unexpected events or crises.
- **Resource Allocation:** Enables reallocation of financial, human, and time resources to initiatives delivering the greatest impact.
- **Engagement:** Demonstrates to staff, volunteers, and members that USSD’s strategy is active and evolving, fostering stronger engagement.
- **Improved Communication:** Promotes transparency and clarity across the organization and with stakeholders.
- **Risk Management:** Keeps USSD proactive in identifying and mitigating risks tied to market and regulatory changes.
- **Competitive Advantage:** Positions USSD as a forward-thinking leader in the dam and levee industry.
- **Stakeholder Confidence:** Builds trust among members, partners, and the broader community in USSD’s ability to stay relevant and effective.
- **Long-Term Success:** Regular updates ensure USSD maintains a sustainable path toward achieving its strategic vision.





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