



Case Study

From Expertise to Education:

Building AIAI's Framework



The Association for the Improvement of American Infrastructure (AIAI) is strengthening how infrastructure professionals learn, collaborate, and turn experience into action. Using the IACET accreditation structure, AIAI is strengthening the foundation behind its education programs—bringing greater consistency, clarity, and quality to every stage of the learning experience. The result is a more connected way to share expertise across the public and private sectors, equip professionals with practical insight, and inspire better decisions on the projects that shape our communities and our future.

For AIAI, earning IACET accreditation was about more than awarding CEUs. It was about bringing infrastructure professionals together to learn from one another and providing the framework to support its ongoing educational programming goals.

Note: All images were provided by the Association for the Improvement of American Infrastructure (AIAI).

For more information visit <https://aiai-infra.org/>

Overview

For the Association for the Improvement of American Infrastructure (AIAI), earning accreditation from the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) was never just about awarding continuing education units (CEUs). It was about strengthening something that has always been central to AIAI: bringing public and private infrastructure professionals together to learn from one another, translate experience into practical knowledge, and help people make better decisions on real projects. Accreditation gave AIAI a disciplined framework to support that work as its education programs grow, without losing the practitioner-led, industry-connected character that makes them valuable.

AIAI's accreditation became effective August 1, 2026. Because the organization is still early in its accredited-provider journey, AIAI is careful not to overstate long-term learner or organizational outcomes. The early impact is visible in how the association now turns industry expertise into more consistent learning experiences: responsibilities are clearer, learning outcomes and assessments are more closely connected, instructors are prepared within a shared framework, and learners move through a more consistent process from enrollment through completion.

About the Organization

Established in 2012, AIAI is a national 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization focused on improving how infrastructure projects are planned and delivered. Its community brings together public owners and private-sector professionals from across government, engineering, construction, finance, law, operations, insurance, policy, and other disciplines. The organization was formed to create an environment where public and private entities work together to promote growth and sustainability of America's infrastructure, fostering innovative solutions in the forms of policy, programs, and delivery.

Through a hands-on, action-driven approach, AIAI provides education, information and resources to elected and appointed officials and governmental agencies to ensure they are equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to deliver their communities' critical infrastructure. AIAI's Education Department turns cross-sector experience into practical learning experiences that help participants understand not only how infrastructure delivery works, but also how different partners see the same project, decision, or risk.

AIAI operates with eight full-time staff, including two employees dedicated to the Education Department. That lean structure requires clarity, discipline, and repeatable practices. The education team supports the full learning experience, from program development and learner support to quality assurance and administration, making it especially important to build processes that can grow with the organization without becoming disconnected from the people the programs are designed to serve.

As an IACET Accredited Provider, AIAI demonstrates its commitment to high-quality continuing education and may award IACET Continuing Education Units for qualifying programs developed and delivered in accordance with the ANSI/IACET Standard for Continuing Education and Training.



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Building the Foundation

For AIAI, the most important operational change was not a new platform or policy; it was a clearer way to connect what infrastructure professionals need to know with how the organization designs, delivers, assesses, and improves education. AIAI began treating education as a complete lifecycle: identifying learner needs, defining outcomes, designing the program, preparing instructors, delivering instruction, assessing learning, gathering feedback, and documenting what should improve next. Each stage now informs the next, creating a stronger connection between the program's purpose and the evidence that learning has occurred.

That approach also clarified accountability. The Director of Education has formal responsibility for educational governance, compliance, and AIAI's quality system, including maintaining policies and documentation, conducting the annual internal review, identifying areas for corrective action, and reporting findings to executive leadership. The Education Coordinator supports that work through day-to-day program administration, learner communication, learning-management-system support, and program records. Accreditation also depended on support beyond the Education Department: executive leadership provided the resourcing and organizational commitment the process required, while cross-departmental collaboration—including with the Director of Operations and Technology on process development and quality-assurance review—helped translate those requirements into everyday practice. The goal is not more administration for its own sake, but a reliable structure that allows AIAI to deliver quality education consistently as programming expands.

Technology supports the learning experience rather than defining it. Deployed together, the technology platforms provide continuity from participation through completion and help AIAI preserve learner records for at least seven years. The technology matters because it supports a more dependable experience for learners, instructors, and staff; it is the infrastructure behind the education, not the education itself.

AIAI's greatest educational strength is the experience of the people who make up the infrastructure industry. The accreditation process helped the association create a more consistent way to bring that experience into the classroom. Instructors and subject matter experts still teach from real projects and professional practice, but they now work within clearer expectations about what learners should achieve and how each session supports the larger program. When an internal review found that guest-instructor preparation was lacking consistency, AIAI responded by giving instructors earlier access to course materials and expectations and introducing pre-session preparation calls so each contributor could see how their expertise fit into the full learning experience.

The result is a stronger experience for everyone involved. Staff has clearer ownership of each stage, instructors better understand what learners need from them, and participants encounter more consistent expectations, assessment, support, and completion requirements. Equally important, AIAI can preserve the candid, practitioner-to-practitioner learning central to the association while supporting it with a scalable framework.

"AIAI's members bring deep experience across every stage of infrastructure delivery, and this accreditation gives the association a stronger framework for turning that experience into meaningful professional education. That is valuable for public agencies building internal capacity, for member companies developing their teams and for the infrastructure industry as a whole. Better-informed partners make better decisions, and that ultimately supports stronger project outcomes."

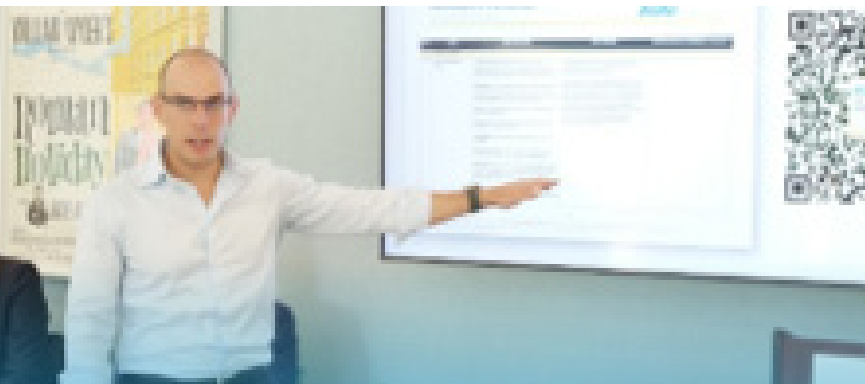
— Sam Chai, Chairman of the AIAI Board of Directors
and President of Kiewit Development Company

Why IACET Fit AIAI

Before accreditation, AIAI did not need to invent industry expertise. It already had experienced instructors, trusted relationships with public- and private-sector practitioners, and a strong commitment to practical infrastructure education. The challenge was to create a framework strong enough to capture and deliver that expertise consistently as AIAI's education work grew.

IACET was a strong fit because infrastructure is inherently multidisciplinary. A single project may bring together government, engineering, construction, finance, law, operations, insurance, policy, and community perspectives, and AIAI's learners reflect that same breadth. A profession-specific accreditation framework would not have addressed the full community AIAI serves. The ANSI/IACET Standard offered a broader quality framework for how continuing education is designed, delivered, evaluated, documented, and improved, aligning with AIAI's goal of creating one common foundation for learning across professional boundaries.

AIAI initiated the accreditation process in August 2025 by obtaining its IACET application. Active work toward accreditation did not begin until January 2026, with the application submitted in May and approval granted in July 2026—an active accreditation effort of approximately seven months. For an eight-person association, and particularly for a two-person Education Department continuing to run programs and support learners throughout the process, accreditation required sustained attention. It also pushed AIAI to make decisions that would support the next stage of growth rather than simply satisfy a one-time review.



AIAI's larger goal is to make high-quality infrastructure education more accessible while keeping it practical, rigorous, and connected to the work professionals are doing.

Signature Programs: AIAI P3 Certificate Program

The AIAI Public Sector P3 Certificate Program is the primary continuing education program within AIAI's accredited framework and one of the clearest examples of the association's approach to industry learning. Public-sector officials may have responsibility for evaluating complex infrastructure delivery options even when they have limited exposure to public-private partnership (P3) structures or the financial, contractual, technical, and operational considerations that accompany them. The program gives those professionals a place to build a shared foundation, ask practical questions, and learn directly from people who work across the project lifecycle.

AIAI's needs analysis showed that participants required both foundational knowledge and a stronger understanding of how P3 decisions are made in practice. In response, the certificate program was designed to move learners from core concepts toward applied decision-making, helping them understand how projects are evaluated, procured, governed, financed, delivered, and managed over time. That progression reflects the reality of infrastructure delivery: no single decision sits in isolation, and no single discipline has all of the answers.

Cohort 3 included eight instructional modules supported by case study sessions, assessments, and a cumulative final examination. Learners were required to achieve at least 80 percent on mapped

assessment items. AIAI also used its virtual learning environment to coordinate course access, learner progress, instructional materials, assessments, and records, giving participants a clearer path through a program that draws on multiple disciplines and instructors.

As the quality framework matured, AIAI continued to strengthen the program. According to Yousef Salama, Director of Education, updates made during the IACET accreditation process included making content more operational rather than introductory, streamlining the program from 11 months to six months. Over the same period, participation also grew from an average of 55 learners in previous cohorts to over 100 in Cohort 4. The changes reflect AIAI's larger goal: make high-quality infrastructure education more accessible while keeping it practical, rigorous, and connected to the work professionals are doing.

Learner perspectives provide an early indication of whether that approach is working. Daniel J. Lewis, Chief Financial Officer for Frederick County Government in Maryland, described the coursework and case studies as providing “practical insights” that can help public-sector professionals make more informed infrastructure decisions. Matt Barnes, Senior Associate Counsel with the Tennessee Department of Transportation Legal Division, similarly connected his participation to his agency’s work on an active express lane procurement. Nicholas C. Pizzuti, CPM, Finance Director in the Division of Innovative Finance and Delivery at the South Carolina Department of Transportation stated that the P3 certification course provides vital information to organizations new to the industry and hearing experiences from other others “has been a valuable tool.” Those comments matter to AIAI because they connect the learning back to where it is intended to have value: real responsibilities, real projects, and real decisions.

“I have been in the military and public service for 50 years and have led and implemented practically every project delivery method in the transportation industry. The Association for Improvement of American Infrastructure (AIAI) is my go-to organization for practical, high-quality education on the implementation of public-private partnerships (P3s). Heck, I’m even enrolled in their current P3 Certificate Program to have my P3 expertise and professional development formally recognized.”

— Phil Washington, former CEO of Denver International Airport, Los Angeles Metro and the Regional Transportation District (RTD); retired U.S. Army Command Sergeant Major



AIAI offers conferences, webinars, workshops, bootcamps, and other educational activities that serve different purposes across the infrastructure community.

From Learning to Impact

Because AIAI's accreditation became effective August 1, 2026, the association is still building the evidence needed to evaluate longer-term post-accreditation outcomes. What AIAI can already demonstrate is a stronger feedback loop: identify what learners need, see where the learning experience can improve, make a change, document it, and carry that improvement into the next delivery. That discipline matters because AIAI's programs are intended to evolve with the industry they serve.

One example came from Cohort 1. Learners understood the concept of Value for Money (VfM) analysis but indicated they needed more help performing the quantitative work themselves. AIAI responded by adding guided practice and a structured workshop focused on applying the analysis. Financial modeling was incorporated more directly into the learning experience, and case studies were broadened beyond transportation so participants could see how the same principles apply across different types of infrastructure.

That feedback cycle continued with Cohort 3. Learners reported that some supplemental materials could be simplified, that navigating our external Learning Management System (LMS) could be easier, and that the program would benefit from a wider range of examples and some pacing adjustments. AIAI documented those findings and incorporated changes into Cohort 4, including reorganized materials, updated assessments, broader examples, and administrative improvements. The point was not simply to collect feedback, but to show learners that their experience can shape what comes next.

Cohort 3 also established a useful performance baseline. Eleven respondents completed the program evaluation, and every reported measure met or exceeded AIAI's established success thresholds. Overall satisfaction and relevance to professional practice each averaged 4.55 out of 5.0, and the likelihood-to-recommend score was 9.0 out of 10. For AIAI, these results are encouraging because relevance to professional practice is central to the program's purpose.

Given the limited sample size, AIAI views these findings as an early benchmark rather than evidence of long-term impact. Their immediate value is that the association now has a repeatable way to collect learner feedback, compare results against expectations, and use those findings to shape future program delivery. As additional accredited cohorts are completed, AIAI will be able to build a stronger picture of learner achievement, practical application, and longer-term value.

“For learners, AIAI's accreditation means the certificate represents more than attendance. It reflects structured, outcomes-based professional education whose quality has been independently reviewed. IACET CEUs provide learners with a documented record of that work. That is particularly meaningful in infrastructure, where professionals often work across agencies, companies, disciplines, and project types and need learning that can travel with them throughout their careers.”

— Yousef Salama, Director of Education at AIAI

Quality, Innovation, and Continuous Improvement

IACET accreditation provides external validation of the framework AIAI built around its educational programs. Just as important, it gave the association a practical structure for continuous improvement. Quality now runs through every stage of AIAI's education work—planning, delivery, evaluation, and improvement—rather than surfacing mainly at course development or when an external review approaches.

AIAI now conducts a formal annual review of its education operations. Rather than examining individual pieces in isolation, the review considers how the following elements work together to support the learner and the integrity of the program:

- Governance
- Program design
- Delivery
- CEU administration
- Assessment
- Learner feedback
- Records

This gives AIAI an opportunity to identify gaps, assign responsibility, make corrections, and confirm that improvements have been carried forward. It also helps a lean team separate busy work from what genuinely strengthens the learning experience.

The accredited framework also creates an important distinction between the many ways AIAI shares knowledge and the programs that qualify for IACET CEUs. AIAI offers conferences, webinars, workshops, bootcamps, and other educational activities that serve different purposes across the infrastructure community. IACET CEUs are awarded only for programs that meet the requirements of AIAI's accredited system and demonstrates that the required learning, assessment, evaluation, and documentation elements have been addressed.

That distinction protects the value of the CEU for the learner and the organization. A CEU is awarded because a participant completed a defined learning experience and met documented requirements, not simply because the content was educational. For AIAI, maintaining that distinction is part of building trust in the education it provides.



AIAI expects education to play a larger role in public-owner capacity, private-sector professional development, public readiness, and the shared understanding that helps public and private partners work together more effectively.

Looking Ahead

AIAI's longer-term plan is not simply to offer more courses. It is to use the accredited foundation to make education a stronger part of how the association supports the infrastructure community. AIAI's longer-term education plan anticipates new learning opportunities in different formats while maintaining the same underlying quality framework. Over time, AIAI expects education to play a larger role in public-owner capacity, private-sector professional development, project readiness, and the shared understanding that helps public and private partners work together more effectively.

This next phase is designed to serve everyone AIAI's accredited framework connects—participants, staff, instructors, and partners alike. For participants, that means structured professional development and CEUs that travel with them as their careers advance. Staff can rely on processes that do not need to be rebuilt every time a new program is introduced. Instructors can understand how their expertise fits into a larger learning journey, and partners can work within a shared framework for what quality education should include and how to demonstrate effectiveness. The common thread is connection: people bring different expertise to the same infrastructure challenges and learn how to see the work from more than one perspective. AIAI is also considering how recognition of IACET CEUs can better support professionals whose work crosses disciplinary boundaries. Rather than building separate education systems for different professions, the association plans to continue developing programs within its IACET-accredited framework and, as the portfolio grows, explore broader recognition of those CEUs by employers, professional associations, public agencies, and licensing bodies where appropriate.

The next important evidence point will come as additional accredited cohorts are completed and AIAI can compare learner achievement, feedback, application of learning, and longer-term engagement. The systems needed to gather that evidence are now in place. The opportunity is to use that evidence not only to demonstrate quality, but also to keep listening to the industry and improving what AIAI teaches, how it teaches it, and who the education can serve.

“At AIAI, education has always been about helping people make better decisions as they bring projects to market on real projects. Infrastructure is complicated, and no one discipline has all the answers. Our role is to bring public owners and industry practitioners together, create a trusted place to learn from one another, and make that knowledge practical. IACET accreditation gives us the structure to do that consistently and at scale, while keeping the learning grounded in the people and projects that make up this industry.”

— Lisa Buglione, Executive Director of AIAI

What AIAI Learned Along the Way

AIAI's experience suggests that accreditation works best when an organization starts with the purpose of the learning rather than the paperwork around it. A learning need should lead to clear objectives; those objectives should shape instruction and assessment; and learner feedback and records should help determine needed improvements. When those connections are clear, policies stop feeling like separate compliance requirements and become part of a learning system that people can actually use.

Clear ownership matters just as much. In a lean organization, quality assurance can easily become something everyone supports, but no one clearly owns. AIAI addressed that risk by defining responsibility for governance, compliance, administration, and review. That made accreditation part of everyday education operations rather than a project that appears only when an external review is approaching.

AIAI also learned that asking for feedback is only useful if learners can see that the organization does something with it. Concerns about content, navigation, pacing, or practical application are documented and assigned for follow-up. Changes can then be incorporated into a future delivery and evaluated again, creating a visible cycle of listening, responding, and improving.

Perhaps most importantly, the framework has to fit the organization that will actually use it. AIAI developed its approach with eight full-time employees and a two-person Education Department. The goal was never to reproduce the structure of a large institution. It was to create clear, repeatable practices that a lean association could maintain consistently while preserving the flexibility and close industry relationships that make AIAI's education distinctive.

For AIAI, the early value of accreditation is therefore about much more than the CEU itself. It has created a stronger foundation for doing what the association has always existed to do: connect people across the infrastructure community, turn experience into shared knowledge, and help that knowledge travel farther. As accredited programming grows, AIAI can reach more public owners, infrastructure professionals, instructors, and partners without separating growth from quality or losing sight of the people behind the projects.

About IACET

The International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the global quality of continuing education and training. IACET developed the original Continuing Education Unit (CEU) and is the premier standards-setting body for quality in training and education. Organizations that earn IACET accreditation have demonstrated their commitment to excellence through adherence to rigorous, research-based standards that promote continuous improvement and learner success.

Learn more at www.iacet.org



 +1 (703) 763-0705

 info@iacet.org  www.iacet.org