

**ALEC** | American  
Legislative  
Exchange  
Council

LIMITED GOVERNMENT • FREE MARKETS • FEDERALISM

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2016–2018

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*Chief Executive Officer*

**Lisa Bowen**

*Vice President, Finance and Administration*

**Michael Bowman**

*Vice President, Policy*

**Bartlett Cleland**

*Vice President, Center for Innovation and Technology*

**Jeff Lambert**

*Vice President, Member Relations*

**Bill Meierling**

*Vice President, Public Affairs*

**Jonathan Williams**

*Vice President, Center for State Fiscal Reform*

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## >> INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing and promoting the Jeffersonian principles of limited government, free markets and federalism at the state level. ALEC accomplishes this mission by educating elected officials on making sound policy and providing them with a platform for collaboration with other elected officials and business leaders. This



forum for the free exchange of ideas—along with education for elected officials—has made ALEC one of the most powerful forces in the resurgence of free-market reform at the state level.

In January 2016, the ALEC leadership engaged American Philanthropic, LLC to help the organization construct a strategic development plan aimed at expanding its donor base, ensuring its long-term viability and increasing its effectiveness in realizing its mission. In line with these overall goals, the organization seeks

to diversify its funding sources and grow its operating budget to \$10 million. This growth will be the foundation for a possible capital campaign—with an objective of establishing a \$2 million reserve—in conjunction with the organization’s upcoming 45th anniversary. In order to expand both ALEC reach and funding base, it has an ambitious plan to expand programming, particularly policy centers, to reach and engage increased numbers of individual citizens.

After speaking with the ALEC leadership and staff, and upon a thorough review and analysis of the organization’s current operations, American Philanthropic delivered an initial organizational audit to ALEC. The audit articulated five major recommendations that will enable the organization to achieve its development and programming goals over the next few years.

The development audit was the basis for discussion during an in-person strategic planning session held on February 24, 2016, at the ALEC office in Arlington, VA. The session was attended by Lisa B. Nelson (Chief Executive Officer), Lisa Bowen (Vice President, Finance and Administration), Michael Bowman (Vice President, Policy), Bartlett Cleland (Vice President, Center for Innovation and Technology), Jeff Lambert (Vice President, Member Relations) and Bill Meierling (Vice President, Public Affairs), as well as American Philanthropic consultants Doug Schneider and Rachel Jurado.

The following organizational plan outlines the landmark goal, landmark objectives and core strategies that emerged from that meeting.

## >> GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND KEY BENCHMARKS

The strategies, goals and objectives outlined in this strategic plan will help ALEC pursue its mission, increase its membership, reach a wider audience and have greater influence in protecting our system of federalism and effecting sound policy in the states. This strategic plan is organized around the following landmark goal:

By the end of 2018, ALEC will be widely recognized as the leading legislative organization promoting free-market policy through the exchange of ideas; it will be the go-to policy shop for elected officials at all levels regarding effective state policy. To support this landmark goal, ALEC will diversify and grow its donor base, especially among individuals; increase its annual budget; and lay the foundation for a successful future capital campaign as part of its 45th anniversary.

ALEC will evaluate its progress through twenty specific landmark objectives, which it intends to reach by the end of 2018.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Significantly expand the reach of ALEC to new audiences and build up a network of concerned citizens who can help advance the principles of limited government, free markets and federalism.



### LEADERSHIP OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen and diversify the ALEC Board of Directors and Private Enterprise Advisory Council by 2017, including the creation of an education and training component to help members with fundraising and membership recruitment.
- Build out a distinct and influential (c)(4) board for the ALEC Jeffersonian Project by 2017.

## PROGRAMMATIC OBJECTIVES

- Launch three new policy centers to complement and create opportunities for increased reach and impact on key issues in the primary ALEC work areas—including its task forces, policy academies, meetings and publications:
  - Establish a new Center for the First Amendment by 2016, including a policy director and supporting staff.
  - Establish an additional new center on an identified top policy priority by 2017, including a policy director and supporting staff.
  - Follow up by establishing a third center on an identified top policy priority by 2018.
- Increase the number of ALEC policy academies to at least eight each year: five in 2016, six in 2017 and eight by 2018. These will reach up to another 120 elected officials each year, making them champions of key policy issues.
- Publish one new major annual publication per year, in conjunction with the launch of each new center: one additional by 2016, two additional by 2017 and three additional by 2018. (These publications will be in addition to the existing annual ALEC publications *Rich States, Poor States*, *Report Card on American Education* and *State Tax Cut Roundup*).
- Under the auspices of its new centers, publish, market and widely distribute at least 20 white papers per year on key policy issues: 10 by 2016, 15 by 2017 and 20 by 2018.
- Develop and incorporate new training and orientation seminars for incoming new state chairs; to include onsite HQ training in 2017.

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

- Develop a robust email acquisition and grassroots outreach program for the ALEC Jeffersonian Project, reaching new audiences—including up to 6 million engaged citizens—by the end of 2018.
- Increase the organization’s email outreach to at least 20,000 individuals by 2016.
- Develop a targeted messaging campaign that both focuses on the importance of policy at the state level and effectively reaches a broader and more diversified audience, increasing overall membership and support among individual citizens.



**OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

- Add increased capacity by hiring staff in key positions, including:
  - Database manager in 2016.
  - Accounting assistant in 2016.
  - Development officer in 2016.
  - Membership manager (of corporate and nonprofit relations) in 2017.
  - Senior vice president in 2017.
  - Increase operational capacity such that ALEC is in a position to consider making additional hires in 2017 and 2018 and beyond, including: external relations & coalitions, creative director, senior director of marketing/public relations, copywriter, regional development officers and policy analysts for the new centers: one in 2017 and one in 2018.
- Secure enough office space to accommodate organizational growth by 2016.
- Establish the Jeffersonian Project as a stand-alone powerful entity and hire a fulltime director that does serious voter education and outreach work by 2017.
- Make the American City County Exchange (ACCE) a financially solvent program of ALEC by 2018, to enable hiring a membership/fundraising director and researcher in 2017.

**DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES**

- Increase the annual revenue budget from \$8.6 million in FY 2016 to \$10 million in FY 2018.
- Develop a comprehensive and consistent foundation solicitation program, doubling the number of active foundations supporting ALEC to a minimum of 29 by 2018.
- Significantly increase the number of major donor and foundation meetings to a minimum of 10 per month or 120 per year by 2017 and 15 per month or 180 per year by 2018.
- Expand the base of support by significantly growing the donor base from its current base of 1,800 to at least 3,600 individual donors by 2018.
- Redesign and launch a major donor club as a way to increase the number of its \$1,000+ level donors, creating ways to cultivate them over time, by 2016.
- Lay the foundation for a \$2 million capital campaign in 2018 to establish reserve fund.



## >> ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The American Legislative Exchange Council is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to increase individual liberty, prosperity and the well-being of all Americans by advancing and promoting the principles of limited government, free markets and federalism.

ALEC is the premier free-market organization that provides elected officials the resources they need to make sound policy. It enjoys a broad and growing membership that includes 25 percent of all legislative members and over 200 corporate and nonprofit members. Additionally, ALEC has over 1,800 individual supporters and includes 20 percent of Congress, eight sitting governors and more than 300 local elected officials.

As a forum for collaboration, ALEC offers unparalleled networking and educational opportunities for elected officials at the state and—increasingly—federal and local levels. ALEC is truly a unique organization in the right-of-center policy movement in that it creates an environment for a genuine, nonpartisan exchange

of policy ideas between elected officials and leaders in commerce. It is also the only group doing what it does to educate elected officials, empowering them to make strong policy. It has pursued this mission since 1973 and has been an effective driver of policy change through the present day.

The key to the effectiveness of ALEC is through its policy centers and task forces, which bring policy experts and business leaders together for open and substantive discussions. Through the task forces, stakeholders create models that protect the resurgence of free-market policy at the state level. In fact, a December 2015 analysis of state legislatures found that ALEC members are more collaborative by a nearly three-to-one ratio than their counterparts on both sides of the aisle. They have also been found to be more successful in passing legislation than all legislators in both parties. The same study found that ALEC members surpassed all Democratic legislators in passing legislation by a two-to-one ratio.

While ALEC task forces produce the ideas, the policy centers help publicize these ideas and bring them to a larger audience through a growing



number of issue-specific publications, as well as the organization's newly redesigned website.

The ALEC policy centers enable the organization and its members to stay at the forefront of the free-market movement—engaging issues proactively instead of reacting after-the-fact. These centers keep ALEC focused on driving key priorities and incubating new policy ideas. While ALEC plans to launch more, the first centers founded were: the Center for Innovation & Technology; the Center for State Fiscal Reform; and the Center to Restore the Balance of Government. In addition to helping ALEC be more effective in its policy work, they bring in new philanthropic investors—in particular foundations—interested in each specific policy area.

Given its effectiveness, ALEC is closely scrutinized by the Left and has faced especially harsh attacks from those opposed to free-market policy in the past few years. This caused some upheaval in the organization's funding base, as many corporate members and sponsors broke off to avoid controversy.

However, at the direction of the ALEC 2014 National Chair Linda Upmeyer, ALEC persevered—

remaining steadfast to its principles—and used this difficult period to grow and retool. ALEC focused on strengthening its programming, and is now on better footing than ever both financially and in its capacities. Just as importantly, the organization's new leadership has revitalized ALEC, keeping it organized, focused on its mission and prepared to find and seize new opportunities in policy and fundraising. Finally, through this process of transition, ALEC has wisely sought to maintain—and even increase—the utmost transparency and a broad array of voices in its membership, which will help the organization as it expands its reach with new corporate, foundation and individual supporters.

Having withstood vicious attacks from the Left and the media, ALEC is well positioned to capitalize on opportunities to expand its audience, member benefits, programming and funding base. Success in these areas will help ALEC remain the leading organization driving free-market reform at the state level and become the leading organization educating America's elected officials on sound policy that expands all Americans' economic opportunities and personal liberty.

## >> MISSION, VISION AND CORE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

### MISSION STATEMENT

The ALEC mission is to increase individual liberty, prosperity and the well-being of all Americans by advancing and promoting the principles of limited government, free markets and federalism.

ALEC accomplishes its mission by providing both an educational platform for elected officials and an open forum for the free exchange of ideas between policymakers, business leaders and individual citizens—one that produces real public policy solutions that can be implemented at the state level.

### VISION STATEMENT

The vision of ALEC is for a better America that provides the greatest opportunity possible for its citizens to flourish and for communities to succeed, as well as more sovereignty and freedom at the state level.

ALEC executes its mission in order to fulfill its larger vision through an array of core programs and projects, which include multiple policy centers, task forces, publications and studies, as well as the American City County Exchange and major events and meetings.

### CORE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

#### Policy Centers

##### *ALEC Center for Innovation and Technology*

The ALEC Center for Innovation and Technology provides state lawmakers with guides, data, research and a structure to imagine and create a plan of action for how innovation could benefit their states. Whether improving processes, creating products or developing new ideas, the center provides a place for breakout inspiration and the examination of policy improvements.

States have the opportunity to address policy challenges through innovation and experimentation and to lead by being the “laboratories of democracy.” Most of the challenges are not easy, but innovation is often the way through, and states are best equipped for this challenge. Confronting challenges in these “laboratories” and taking the risks to create a better tomorrow provides a best-practices blueprint for other states and the federal government. States are the incubators of solutions. But even when the creative goes astray, the experience provides valuable insight for other states as they grapple with their challenges. Through this center, ALEC fosters the pursuit of invention and innovation and actively equips elected officials in this process.



### *ALEC Center to Restore the Balance of Government*

The ALEC Center to Restore the Balance of Government is a natural outgrowth of ALEC as the organization has such a strong federalism focus. The center helps realize the goals articulated in the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.”

Decisions that impact individual communities should be made by the states, or referred by the states to individual municipalities. Genuine accountability to hardworking taxpayers comes from state and local elected officials working with community members to determine a plan of action that is right for each individual state, city or town. The ALEC Center to Restore the Balance of Government provides tools for state lawmakers to set priorities for state control over state issues. Real solutions come from the fifty laboratories of democracy, not one-size-fits-all federal government policies that disregard regional differences and local community needs.

### *ALEC Center for State Fiscal Reform*

The need to reform state budgeting is more vital than ever before. Clearly, the “business-as-usual” budgeting approach of raiding non-general fund accounts and using tricky accounting techniques is not a viable long-term solution. States need innovative budgeting strategies to address today’s economic challenges—without resorting to economically damaging tax increases. As the ALEC *Rich States, Poor States* publication so aptly points out, tax increases come at a very high cost: the erosion of state economic competitiveness.

ALEC is a valuable resource to help create true fiscal reform and protect taxpayer dollars. The ALEC Center for State Fiscal Reform provides sensible solutions for responsible budget reform by helping elected officials understand what works and what fails.



### Task Forces

The key to the effectiveness and impact of ALEC in the states is through its task forces, which bring elected officials, policy experts and business leaders together for an open and substantive discussion. Through the task forces, these stakeholders collaborate and work creatively through key policy issues to develop model policy, which can then be a reference for states for consideration. Examples of current task force policy issues include: Civil Justice; Commerce, Insurance and Economic Development; Communications and Technology; Criminal Justice Reform; Education and Workforce Development; Energy, Environment and Agriculture; Federalism and International Relations; Health and Human Services; and Tax and Fiscal Policy. In addition to state policy initiatives and model policy, the task forces help produce a wide variety of research and publications.

### Publications and Studies

ALEC publishes landmark annual publications such as *Rich States, Poor States: ALEC-Laffer State Economic Competitiveness Index* and the *Report Card on American Education*. In addition, ALEC supporters have recently provided resources for additional publications and policy research including:

- *Innovate: Policy for the Future*
- *Article V: A Handbook for State Lawmakers*
- *State Factors: The Effect of State Taxes on Charitable Giving; Federally Managed Lands in the West; Optimizing the Abuse-deterrent Opioids Market; and Recidivism Reduction: Community-Based Supervision Alternatives to Incarceration*

### Limited Government at the Most Local Level

The American City County Exchange (ACCE) is America's only non-partisan, free-market forum for village, town, city and county policymakers. ACCE brings together local elected officials, job creators and policy analysts to share ideas and experiences that promote accountability, transparency and effectiveness in their communities. ACCE boasts more than 300 local officials who gather annually. The workshops are detailed and technical and focus on free-market solutions to policy challenges, government efficiency and learning about the emergence of new technology and emergency services.



## Events

### *Annual Meeting*

This meeting brings attendees together to learn about and debate real, innovative solutions to policy issues, such as direct-to-consumer automobile sales, community-based alternatives to incarceration and expanding training opportunities for workforce development. In July 2015, ALEC hosted three presidential candidates, other dignitaries and more than 1,300 state leaders and industry experts at the 42nd ALEC Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA.

### *States and Nation Policy Summit*

Each winter, ALEC hosts the State and Nation Policy Summit, a three-day conference consisting of intensive, in-depth educational sessions addressing issues that will be at the top of state legislative agendas the following year. And because election cycles have consequences, ALEC holds this in Washington, D.C., during election years and then at another location in off-election years. Nearly 1,000 state and local lawmakers, policy experts and other stakeholders gather at this conference to explore the philosophical principles that guide a free society. ALEC policy experts and lawmakers share tips on how to be an effective legislator. During the winter policy summit, ALEC also hosts its Legislative Staff Training. This program recognizes legislative staffers from across the country who are identified as rising leaders in the fight for freedom. During the course of



three days, the staffers receive resources to help them work in state capitols to make government more efficient, effective and accountable to the people.

### *Spring Task Force Summit*

Each spring, 500 lawmakers and other stakeholders gather for an intensive meeting of ALEC task force members to discuss new developments in the states and develop policy priorities for the year. In Savannah, GA, in May 2015, ALEC held one of the largest spring task force meetings in recent history. ALEC attendees discussed such issues as automated vehicles, student testing, telemedicine and tax reform. A group of lawmakers participated in a tour of the Port of Savannah, the second busiest U.S. container exporter in the country.

## CORE STRATEGIES

To achieve the objectives outlined in this plan, ALEC will undertake five core strategies. From FY 2016–2018, ALEC will:

### **I. LEADERSHIP CORE STRATEGY**

Strengthen the organization’s Board of Directors and the Private Enterprise Advisory Council by diversifying membership, involving more individuals from the conservative philanthropic community and educating, equipping and empowering them with the tools and resources they need to grow the organization.

#### **Goals**

1. Develop and institute formal, required training sessions for board members as part of the ALEC Annual Meeting.
2. Produce and distribute board collateral materials to assist board members with membership recruitment and fundraising.
3. Identify and cultivate mission-oriented donors who can potentially serve in a leadership capacity at ALEC.
4. Set collective fundraising goals for the Board of Directors and PEAC each year.
5. Implement a regular process of board-driven self-assessment to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of the Board of Directors and create opportunities to provide recommendations for strengthening it.

#### **Additionally**

6. Identify and cultivate individuals and philanthropists of significance and influence to serve on the (c)(4) Board of Directors for the Jeffersonian Project.





## II. PROGRAMMING CORE STRATEGY

Assert more influence on state-based public policy by making ALEC work more accessible, relevant and timely for a significantly broader audience of individuals, opinion leaders and elected officials.

### Goals

1. Expand distribution of publications to include larger segments of elected officials and other potential members, essentially turning thought leadership into a powerful recruitment opportunity.
2. Utilize new ALEC policy centers to house, organize and actively promote the organization's research and policy prescriptions.
3. Expand the membership base and deepen engagement by current ALEC members.
4. Increase transparency in the policy creation process, making research and policy accessible not only to legislative and corporate members, but to other constituencies as well.
5. Write and publish new annual publications on key issues associated with each new center.
6. Increase the ALEC educational platform and suite of services for policymakers and their staff, including additional training opportunities, more academies and utilizing technology to distribute content and tools in a cost effective way, thereby strengthening overall member benefits.
7. Formulize state chair training, including developing a manual and hosting live training sessions to help with membership recruitment and fundraising at the ALEC offices and in association with national meetings.

### III. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS CORE STRATEGY

Reach new audiences and build broad support for ALEC and its mission by 1) leveraging its new website and technology to generate appealing, original content and deliver it to a wide cross-section of individuals and 2) fostering strategic partnerships with natural allies.

#### Goals

1. Create new, rich media content—including webinars, podcasts, videos, apps and other materials—and actively distribute it digitally.
2. Develop and launch a regular email outreach campaign, including A/B testing, to push out content from website.
3. Increase outreach to, and coordination with, allied organizations within the broader conservative and free-market coalition.
4. Develop and implement a comprehensive marketing plan to effectively market ALEC as the ready-made, go-to policy shop for elected officials at all levels.
5. Leverage ALEC alumni to increase awareness of ALEC and strengthen the organization's brand.







#### IV. OPERATIONAL CORE STRATEGY

Increase operational capacity over the next three years by making strategic investments in 1) individuals that possess high human capital, filling key staffing positions, and 2) other necessary resources to allow for greater efficiency, reach and impact as an organization.

##### Goals

1. Ensure that each member of the ALEC senior leadership team is assigned to and involved with the appropriate strategies as part of this plan.
2. Devote increased resources to database upkeep and management, streamlining processes and ensuring accurate information and records for fundraising and marketing, including hiring a new database manager.
3. Hire new staff to increase the organization's development and fundraising capacity including a new membership manager and development officer.
4. Hire new programming staff in conjunction with the launch of each one of the new policy centers.
5. Hire new staff, including a senior vice president and accounting assistant, to assist with overall operations of the organization and free up the time of key senior staff.
6. Hire a fulltime director to oversee and run the Jeffersonian Project, the sister (c)(4) project of ALEC, making it a substantial stand-alone operation.
7. Hire both a membership & development director and researcher for ACCE, firmly establishing it as a self-sustaining affiliate of ALEC.
8. Finalize plans and secure additional office space based on the current and near- and mid-term operational needs of ALEC.

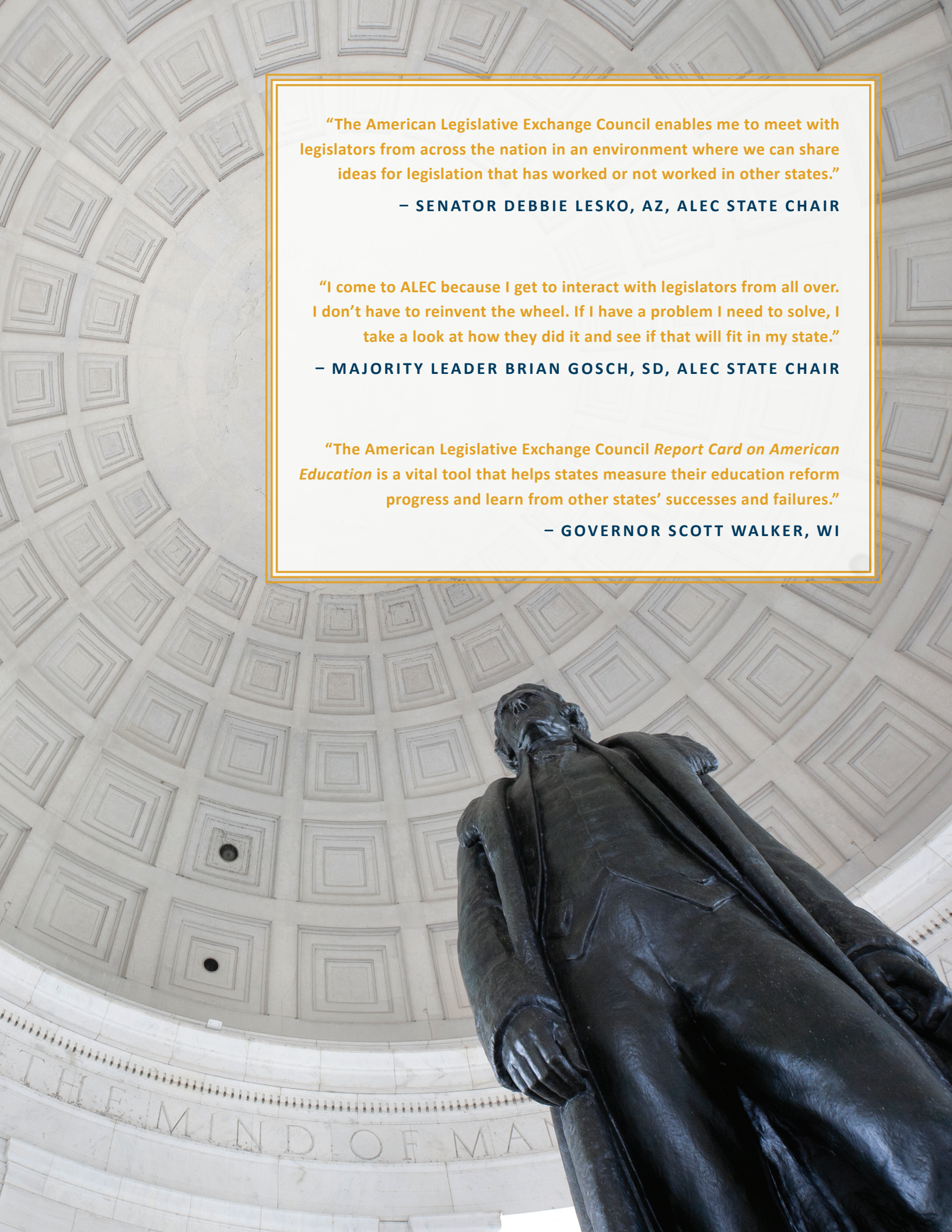
## V. DEVELOPMENT CORE STRATEGY

Increase overall fundraising revenue and grow and diversify the ALEC donor base by acquiring and cultivating individual donors and developing a comprehensive and consistent foundation solicitation program.

### Goals

1. Separate out the ALEC membership program from development in order to create a more traditional development operation.
2. Expand the ALEC direct-mail prospecting program to grow the organization's individual donor base.
3. Increase mailings and digital solicitations to the ALEC house-file.
4. Strengthen the existing major donor club for individual donors, including regular communication and solicitations, personal meetings and donor events.
5. Update the planned giving program, incorporating it into the major donor club.
6. Significantly increase the number of meetings with major donors and prospects (individuals, foundations and corporations).
7. Expand and streamline the organization's foundation solicitation program, increasing foundation support to nearly 15 percent of overall revenue and 50 percent of donations (outside of membership, events and other dues).
8. Fully engage board members and equip and empower them to help with fundraising.
9. Create opportunities for individual donors to become involved in the organization, including establishing individual donor tracks at national meetings.





**“The American Legislative Exchange Council enables me to meet with legislators from across the nation in an environment where we can share ideas for legislation that has worked or not worked in other states.”**

**– SENATOR DEBBIE LESKO, AZ, ALEC STATE CHAIR**

**“I come to ALEC because I get to interact with legislators from all over. I don’t have to reinvent the wheel. If I have a problem I need to solve, I take a look at how they did it and see if that will fit in my state.”**

**– MAJORITY LEADER BRIAN GOSCH, SD, ALEC STATE CHAIR**

**“The American Legislative Exchange Council *Report Card on American Education* is a vital tool that helps states measure their education reform progress and learn from other states’ successes and failures.”**

**– GOVERNOR SCOTT WALKER, WI**



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