

Invest in Your Success and the Future of Structural Engineering

By Anne M. Ellis, P.E., F.ASCE



How much are you willing to invest in your success? Structural engineers spend \$10s, if not \$100s of thousands preparing to launch their careers technically. And that is usually sufficient for the first five years of a career. Beyond this, what are you personally investing to enhance your career and your practice? For our practices, firms, and companies to grow and thrive requires competent people, 21st-century solutions to address 21st-century problems, business savvy, and more. Ensuring a strong pipeline of people, solutions, and business aids necessitates collective investment. No one firm can accomplish this alone. This is where the SEI Futures Fund comes in.

The SEI Futures Fund is your vehicle for impact investing through collective action to improve our profession and careers. Donations from one individual or organization to the SEI Futures Fund are combined with donations from others providing for significant investments in programs that otherwise may not happen. Since 2014, the SEI Futures Fund has awarded grants totaling over \$800,000 to:

- Promote student interest in structural engineering
- Support younger member involvement in SEI
- Provide opportunities for professional development

“With a grant from the Futures Fund, the SEI Global Activities Division hosted the Future Impact of Covid-19 on the Commercial Development Market virtual event, kicking off informative and timely presentations on the impact the pandemic and other global events are expected to have on our profession,” said Derek Skolnik, Chair of SEI Global Activities Division.

These SEI Futures Fund investments generate social, environmental, and economic benefits to donors and our profession. The programs considered for investment are evaluated through an impact lens. Consider these SEI Futures Fund-generated impacts:

- **Social:** Was your firm able to grow through new hires of students and/or young professionals that received one of the hundred+ SEI Futures Fund scholarships to engage at an in-person Structures Congress?
- **Environmental:** Are you considering structural embodied carbon in your design, capitalizing on the industry benchmarks and targets generated by the SE 2050 database developed thanks to the \$25,000 investment from the SEI Futures Fund?
- **Economic:** Are you better able to manage your practice risks thanks to knowledge gained from the Agreement Basics for Engineers guide included with this magazine thanks to the SEI Futures Fund \$13,500 investment to publish and distribute it to 30,000 practicing structural engineers?

“The SEI Futures Fund has allowed us to take a major step forward in advancing the goals of net-zero embodied carbon structures. The grant provided us with the resources needed to develop our beta database of structural embodied carbon that will allow us to establish

national trends of embodied carbon in the structural systems we design. Published targets for structural embodied carbon reduction will be developed as a result. We’ve seen an immediate impact on industry momentum around SE 2050 and its goals. Without the SEI Futures Fund grant, we might not have built the momentum we have today. The SEI Futures Fund grant was the catalyst we needed, and it couldn’t have come at a better time,” said Michael Gryniuk, Chair of SEI SE 2050 Committee.

There are many more programs making an impact and generating returns for the savvy, future-forward structural engineers investing in the SEI Futures Fund. Consider:

- **Global Practice Guide** to prepare and empower those with the passion and ambition to work globally with the technical, professional, and business requisites for success
- **Structural Fire Engineering Curriculum** to help develop future engineers that can work in innovative environments and address the 21st-century demands of clients

- **Facilitation and Leadership Training Workshop** to equip local chapter leaders with usable tools on facilitation to improve their leadership skills to boost their volunteer and professional endeavors

I encourage you to contribute to the SEI Futures Fund and track your individual impact return on investment (IROI):

$$IROI = \frac{IV - IIA}{IIA} \times 100\%$$

where: IV = Impact value

IIA = Initial investment amount

You will quickly see your investment is delivering outsized returns.

“A Futures Fund scholarship allowed me to attend my first Structures Congress. That opportunity led me to 7 more Congresses, 3 national committee chair positions, 2 task committees, 2 job offers, a position on the Futures Fund Board, and many lifelong friends and mentors. There’s no doubt my career would look different if I hadn’t received that scholarship,” said Linda Kaplan, SEI Futures Fund Board member.

Your career is the most important investment you will ever make. It is an alternative and diversification to your traditional investment portfolio. Your career can be your very best investment in a changing economy. As you invest in your career, invest in the SEI Futures Fund with a tax-deductible, year-end gift at <https://bit.ly/3osX0O5>. Thank you for investing in the future of structural engineering!▪



Anne Ellis is the Executive Director of the Charles Pankow Foundation and serves as an outside director on the boards of Alpha Corporation and GEI Consultants. In addition, she is chair of the SEI Futures Fund Board, serves on the ASCE Industry Leaders Council, and is chair of the Board of Directors of the National Institute of Building Sciences.