



2026 LEADERSHIP STRATEGY SESSION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 23, 2026, the Board of Directors of The Economic Club of Washington, D.C. convened for a Leadership Strategy Session at the George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon. The session brought together the Economic Club's leadership to reflect on the organization's current position of strength and to identify priorities that will guide its continued evolution.

The retreat focused on three core areas: Leadership Programming, Membership Experience, and Club Sustainment & Financials. Across all discussions, Board members reaffirmed the Club's unique role as a premier forum for leaders, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen member engagement, expand global footprint, and ensure long-term institutional sustainability.

KEY THEMES

- There is interest in expanding the Club's global footprint, including greater engagement with international leaders and convenings.
- Innovation in programming formats and member engagement models will be critical to sustaining relevance and growth.
- Member value remains the Club's central strength, driven by high-caliber programming and peer-to-peer engagement, but is not consistently experienced across the full membership.
- The Club's success is closely tied to the leadership and presence of David Rubenstein, highlighting the importance of long-term continuity planning.
- The Club is well-positioned financially, creating an opportunity to take proactive steps toward long-term sustainability, including exploration of an endowment.
- The 40th Anniversary represents a key strategic milestone to continue to elevate the Club's visibility, programming, and impact.

Together, these insights point to a period of opportunity for the Club, one that balances continuity with evolution and builds on the Club's strong foundation to ensure long-term relevance and impact.

The Premier Forum for Leaders



SESSION TOPIC #1: LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING

The Leadership Programming discussion focused on relevant future trends and topics, global speakers, and a 40th Year Milestone Celebration. Board members emphasized the importance of maintaining best-in-class programming while evolving formats and content to reflect emerging trends.

KEY THEMES

- Targeting Relevant Future Trends for Speakers
- Deepen Global Footprint
- 40th Year Milestone Celebration
- Innovative Event Formats

DISCUSSION SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

The “Leadership Programming” discussions focused on relevant future trends and topics, as well as global speakers from business and government who would be of interest across the Club’s different levels of programming. The board also expressed interest in a milestone celebration for the Club’s 40th year, especially alongside the United States’ semiquincentennial celebration. They agreed that Jensen Huang of Nvidia would be a compelling featured speaker for the celebration.

Participants identified opportunities to deepen the Club’s global footprint through strategic partnerships. The B20 and IMF/World Bank convenings were suggested. The group also expressed interest in the Club presenting more of the current White House administration officials.

There was an understanding that the current draw for members and guests to attend Signature Events at the Club is David Rubenstein’s talent and charisma as the interviewer. As part of the Club’s long-term continuity, board members discussed possible event formats that can continue the Club’s legacy and future.

1. TOPICS & SPEAKERS OF INTEREST

- Artificial Intelligence – impact on health care, workforce, and innovation
- Energy – microgrids, small modular nuclear reactors
- Geopolitics – U.S. & China business dynamics
- Economic Disruption – capital flows and the economy are impacted by private credit and private equity.
- Supply Chain – current landscape of globalization
- D.C. Region – innovation ecosystems
- Innovative Businesses – Waymo’s D.C. launch – Signature event featuring Tekedra Mawakana
- 47th White House Administration – Secure more administration officials to speak at the Club, specifically President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent, Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, and Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau.
- Federal Reserve System – Chair of the Board of Governors Jerome Powell

2. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: MORE VIEWS FROM WORLD LEADERS

- Engage the Diplomatic Advisory Council to think first of the Economic Club as a platform when their heads of state are visiting Washington.
- Increase Ambassadorial events at their residences or embassies.
- Feature high-level ministers and officials from consequential nations, such as Helen McEntee TD, Minister for Defense and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland.
- Suggested speaker: Maria Corina Machado, Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel Prize winner
- Organize convenings to attract speakers from large global events in Washington, such as the upcoming Spring IMF/World Bank Meetings and fall Business 20 (B20) Summit. Suggested speakers from the B20 include Ryan McInerney of Visa and Ken Griffin of Citadel.



SESSION TOPIC #1: LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING | CONTINUED

3. 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

David Rubenstein and board members expressed interest in a milestone celebration for the 40th year, especially alongside the semiquincentennial celebration of the U.S. Caliber of business leaders such as Warren Buffett (25th) or Jeff Bezos (32nd). The consensus was that Jensen Huang of Nvidia should be invited for this event.

4. CONTINUITY OF THE CLUB: EVENT FORMATS SUGGESTED

- Multi-perspective format: Two or more speakers from different ideologies or sectors; structured for multi-viewpoint dialogue
- Speaker & table discussion: Modifying the Executive Conversation for a 30-minute interview with the speaker, followed by 30 minutes of table-level discussion among members on the speaker's topic – this will require smaller tables of 6-8 members.

STRATEGIC TAKEAWAYS

- Continue prioritizing forward-looking, globally relevant topics
- Leverage and utilize strategic partnerships for global events based around international convenings in D.C.
- Execute 40th Year Milestone Celebration
- Test and evaluate innovative event formats





SESSION TOPIC #2: MEMBERSHIP EXPERIENCE

The Membership Experience discussions focused on strengthening the Club's value proposition and ensuring that all members, not only the most engaged, benefit from meaningful participation and connection.

KEY THEMES

- Strong Value Proposition with Uneven Engagement
- Structured Member Lifecycle
- Data-Driven, High-Impact Engagement Opportunities
- Membership Growth & Diversification
- Executive Fellows Program Evolution

DISCUSSION SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

The "Membership Experience" discussions converged on a central challenge and opportunity: how to deliver a consistently high-value, deeply engaging member experience across the entire membership — not just the most active participants.

The Economic Club's core strengths — high-caliber peer network, strong programming, and curated conversations — remain highly differentiated. However, there is a clear need to broaden and diversify membership, increase engagement across all tiers, strengthen onboarding and retention systems, and clarify and evolve the Executive Fellows pipeline.

The discussions were practical and forward-looking, with strong alignment around using intentional structure, data, and targeted programming to scale what already works well.

1. PEER-TO-PEER NETWORK AS CORE VALUE PROPOSITION

The Club's core differentiator is a high-caliber, peer-to-peer network that enables meaningful conversations. This can be summarized as "Connections, Content, Conversations," and should remain the central standard as the Club scales.

2. CLOSING THE ENGAGEMENT GAP

- The Club experiences a highly engaged inner circle (board + regular attendees), and a broader group of low-frequency or passive members. Closing this gap is a top strategic priority.
- Implication: The Club must intentionally design experiences that bring more members into meaningful participation—not just rely on organic engagement.
- Large events are valuable, but smaller, curated experiences drive deeper engagement.
- High-impact formats: Member dinners, member forums, sector-specific roundtables (e.g., healthcare, AI, HR), and curated seating and introductions.

3. MEMBER LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT (ONBOARDING → ENGAGEMENT → RETENTION)

- Focus on the membership experience structure (e.g. 30-60-90 day onboarding journey). Ensure early exposure to: events, member-hosted dinners, and sector-based connections.
- A "Steward Model" would pair new members with experienced members who facilitate connections and ensure early engagement. Referring members should play a key role as natural stewards.
- Support for a member health tracking system built upon the data the Club already tracks.
- Identify disengaged members early and proactively re-engage them.
- Engagement tactics could include: curated invitation-only dinners, milestone-based outreach, and personalized touchpoints informed by engagement data.

5. INDUSTRY DIVERSIFICATION & TARGETED RECRUITMENT

- Historic concentration: real estate, finance, law
- Priority expansion areas: technology / AI, life sciences, fintech / crypto, and emerging industries
- Key tactics include leveraging member referrals to identify rising leaders and companies early, and recruit CEOs directly whenever possible to increase organizational engagement.



SESSION TOPIC #2: MEMBERSHIP EXPERIENCE | CONTINUED

6. EXECUTIVE FELLOWS PROGRAM – CLARIFICATION & EVOLUTION

- The Fellows program is valuable, though would benefit from refinement.
- Key challenges:
 - Unclear pathway to full membership
 - Inconsistent expectations for participation
 - Perception as primarily networking vs. substantive engagement
- Opportunities:
 - Define clear pipeline, progression, and participation expectations
 - Engage fellows in programming input, brainstorming, and intergenerational perspectives
 - Explore pathways for long-tenured fellows to transition into membership

STRATEGIC TAKEAWAYS

- Address engagement disparities across the membership
- Implement a more structured and intentional member lifecycle approach
- Expand high-impact, small-format programming opportunities
- Leverage data and technology to enhance member engagement
- Continue diversifying membership across sectors and leadership levels
- Strengthen and clarify the Executive Fellows program





SESSION TOPIC #3: CLUB SUSTAINMENT & FINANCIALS

The Club Sustainability & Finance discussion focused on ensuring the long-term financial and institutional strength of the organization, with particular emphasis on leadership continuity and the sustainability of the Club's education program.

KEY THEMES

- Leadership Continuity & Institutional Resilience
- Endowment as a Strategic Priority
- Education Program as a Core Differentiator
- Financial Discipline & Growth
- 40th Anniversary as a Strategic Opportunity
- Mission Clarity

DISCUSSION SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

This breakout session focused on the long-term sustainability of The Economic Club of Washington, D.C., centering on two interrelated challenges: how to financially sustain — and potentially expand — the club's flagship scholarship education program beyond its current dependence on David Rubenstein's personal funding and how to preserve the club's overall institutional strength in a post-David leadership era. Participants broadly agreed that the club is currently in a position of financial health and that now is precisely the right moment to take proactive, ambitious steps toward long-term stability.

1. INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE

The club's identity, programming quality, and fundraising capacity are deeply intertwined with David Rubenstein's personal involvement. The group discussed the need for a formal succession and contingency plan, and noted that efforts to diversify the interviewer roster are a positive step, but more effort is needed.

2. ENDOWMENT CREATION AS THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

The most prominent and recurring recommendation was to establish a formal endowment — with a suggested initial target of \$25 million — to sustain the scholarship program long-term. Participants cited the club's current strong cash position as the right moment to act, drawing on private equity and nonprofit governance experience: strengthen the balance sheet during good times, not bad ones.

3. EDUCATION PROGRAM AS THE CLUB'S CORE DIFFERENTIATOR

The group unanimously viewed the scholarship program (currently ~50 scholars per year at \$20,000 each, funded since 2009 by Rubenstein, totaling ~800 scholars) as the club's most distinctive community contribution. Multiple participants argued it should be treated as a permanent strategic pillar, not a contingent one, and discussed the possibility of expansion to close the D.C.-state school funding equity gap.

4. FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE & MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

The group cautioned against using the club's cash reserves for ad hoc spending without strategic justification. They noted the club is approximately 100–200 members below its bylaw cap of 1,200 and that growing to that cap represents a meaningful revenue opportunity before any dues or sponsorship increases would be considered. The recent dues reset (individual dues moved from \$3,000 to \$3,500; some sponsorships roughly doubled) was viewed as successful — no attrition resulted.

5. THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY AS A STRATEGIC INFLECTION POINT

Multiple participants identified the club's upcoming 40th anniversary as a platform to celebrate institutional legacy, launch an endowment, recognize past chairs, revive community grant-giving, and secure a marquee speaker (the NVIDIA CEO was specifically mentioned as a strong candidate).



SESSION TOPIC #3: CLUB SUSTAINMENT & FINANCIALS | CONTINUED

6. RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION ITEMS

- Launch an endowment campaign, with a target of at least \$25 million. The campaign should engage family foundations and corporate sponsors over a 5-year runway.
- Develop a formal succession plan for David's interviewer and leadership roles; continue diversifying who conducts interviews
- Pursue membership growth to the 1,200-person cap before revisiting dues or sponsorship levels; prioritize member experience (especially for new members) to improve retention.
- Protect cash reserves from unplanned spending; ensure any use of surplus capital is tied to board-approved strategic priorities.
- Use the 40th anniversary as a programmatic and fundraising milestone — consider a gala-format dinner event, invite former leadership, and explore reviving the community grant program.
- Humanize the education program in event programming — incorporate scholar success stories, alumni updates, and impact data into opening remarks at signature events.

STRATEGIC TAKEAWAYS

- Develop long-term leadership continuity planning
- Explore the creation of an endowment to support the education program
- Reinforce the education program as a central strategic pillar
- Maintain financial discipline while pursuing thoughtful growth
- Leverage the 40th Anniversary as a strategic inflection point
- Clarify and reaffirm the Club's mission





CROSS-SESSION STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Across all discussions, several priorities emerged that will shape the Club's future direction:

1. STRENGTHENING MEMBER VALUE AND ENGAGEMENT

Ensuring that all members experience the full value of the Club through consistent, high-quality engagement opportunities.

2. ENSURING INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY

Building structures and strategies that sustain the Club's success beyond individual leadership.

3. EXPANDING GLOBAL POSITIONING

Enhancing the Club's role as a global forum for business, economic, and policy leaders.

4. DRIVING INNOVATION IN PROGRAMMING AND EXPERIENCE

Evolving formats, topics, and engagement models to reflect changing member expectations.

5. SECURING LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Positioning the Club for continued strength through disciplined growth and strategic financial planning.

6. LEVERAGING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Using the milestone as a catalyst for visibility, engagement, and long-term impact.

NEXT STEPS & STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The insights from this strategic session reinforce that The Economic Club of Washington, D.C. is well-positioned to build on its strong foundation while thoughtfully evolving to meet future opportunities.

Looking ahead, the Club's focus will center on:

- Explore the creation of an endowment to support the education program
- Reinforce the education program as a central strategic pillar
- Maintain financial discipline while pursuing thoughtful growth
- Leverage the 40th Anniversary as a strategic inflection point
- Clarify and reaffirm the Club's mission

These efforts will support the Club's continued role as the premier forum for leaders and ensure its long-term relevance and impact.



2026 LEADERSHIP STRATEGY SESSION ATTENDEES

Jane Adams, Senior Vice President Worldwide Government Affairs & Policy, Johnson & Johnson

Usman Ahmed, Head of Global Public Affairs and Strategic Research, PayPal

Sameer Bhargava, CEO Asset Solutions, Clark Group

Jeremy Blank, U.S. Tax Chief Strategy Officer, Deloitte LLP

Mary Brady, President & CEO, The Economic Club of Washington D.C.

Suzanne Clark, President & CEO, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Monica Dalwadi, Eastern Region Managing Principal, Baker Tilly

Philip de Picciotto, Founder and President, Octagon

Lawrence Di Rita, Head of Global Public Policy & President Greater Washington D.C., Bank of America

Amy Gilliland, President, General Dynamics Information Technology

Jordan Goldstein, Co-CEO, Gensler

Barbara Humpton, CEO, USA Rare Earth Inc.

J. Stephen Jones, President & CEO, Inova Health System

Amry Junaideen, Greater Washington Market Leader, Deloitte LLP

Terry Kenny, Market President Metro Washington Baltimore and Delaware, TD Bank

Dan Kotter, Greater Washington Managing Partner, EY

DeDe Lea

Michael Parrish, Vice President Public Affairs Science and Sustainability, Bayer

Tony Pierce, Partner-In-Charge Washington D.C., Akin

Linda Rabbitt, Founder/Chairman, rand* construction corporation

David Rubenstein, Co-Founder and Co-Chairman, The Carlyle Group

Kyle Schoppmann, President Mid-Atlantic Region, CBRE

Susan Tynan, CEO, Framebridge

Gregory Washington, President, George Mason University

Alex Wirth, Co-Founder & CEO, Quorum

Candida Wolff, Global Head of Government Affairs, Citigroup Inc.