

# 2026 Strategic Plan Pre-Workshop Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help members prepare for the regional strategic planning workshops. It includes key background from the current plan and exercises to help focus your thinking and contributions.

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## 1. Executive Summary – Where We Are & Why You Matter

### Purpose of the 2026 Strategic Planning Effort

CEN is building a new five-year strategic plan with *member input at the center*. The plan will shape priorities, investments, and collaboration from **2026–2031**. Your voice helps define what matters most for network services, innovation, engagement, collaboration, and community impact.

### Current Strategic Foundation (2019–2024): Key Takeaways

The existing strategic plan (2019–2024) was developed collaboratively with members and guided CEN's work for the last five years. Its core goals were:

1. **Provide Value** – Expand services and enhance network capabilities at scale (value and security focus).
2. **Ignite Innovation** – Empower members with tailored services that support excellence.
3. **Foster Collaboration** – Engage local members and the research & education community.
4. **Promote Advocacy** – Increase awareness of CEN's value and impact.
5. **Enhance Core Resources** – Strengthen technology and human resources foundational to success.



### What's Next

We are not simply updating the existing goals — we're rethinking priorities with fresh member input. This process will help ensure the new plan reflects current challenges, opportunities, and emerging needs.

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## 2. Regional Workshops

The Regional Workshops will act as SWOT Exercises (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). They will help us gather member perspectives about the network and community environment.

### Purpose of This Exercise

- ✓ Surface what is working well today (Strengths)
- ✓ Identify challenges or areas that need improvement (Weaknesses)
- ✓ Highlight emerging opportunities for growth or innovation (Opportunities)
- ✓ Consider external forces or risks that could impact the future (Threats)

### How to Prepare

Before your session, think about each of the four areas below as they relate to your institution and to the broader CEN community.

- **Strengths:** What does CEN do uniquely well? Where are we strongest?
  - **Weaknesses:** Where are barriers, gaps, or service pain points?
  - **Opportunities:** What new capabilities, partnerships, or member needs should CEN explore?
  - **Threats:** What external trends, competition, or risks could impact the network or member success?
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## 3. Draft Agenda

### Welcome & Overview

- Introductions

- Purpose of the session
- What outcomes we're seeking

### **Strategic Context**

- Quick review of past strategic plan highlights
- What has changed since 2019

### **SWOT Breakouts**

Members work in small groups to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

### **Group Reporting & Themes**

Each group shares key insights and common themes.

### **Discussion: Strategic Priorities for 2026–2031**

Input on goals, outcomes, and priorities.

### **Closing & Next Steps**

- What happens after today
- How input will be used
- Opportunities for continued involvement

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## **4. Member Reflection Questions (for Advance Thinking)**

Before attending a workshop (and perhaps to circulate internally in your organization), consider:

### **A. Looking Back (2019–2024)**

1. What initiatives from the current plan had the most meaningful impact?
2. Were there areas that were less successful or didn't fully come to fruition? Why?

## B. Looking Forward (2026–2031)

1. What needs are emerging in your district/organization/community that CEN should prioritize?
2. What new services, capabilities, or collaborations would help you deliver your mission?
3. What external trends (policy, technology, workforce, equity, cybersecurity) matter most for CEN's future focus?

Participants can bring these answers to workshops (printed or digital) to enrich discussion.

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## 5. How Your Input Will Be Used

Your feedback from the workshops and any follow-up surveys or interviews will be compiled and reviewed by the strategic planning team. We will:

- Identify common themes
- Draft goal areas and priorities for the new plan
- Share drafts with members for review before final adoption

The process is iterative and member-driven, meaning your participation shapes both **what** goes into the plan and **how** it is structured.