

Making Banking Easy

Abound's Strategy: 2026 Update

Based on the planning meeting of the board and senior leaders held August 27 to 29, 2026.

Summary

In late August 2026, about three months after moving to a new core system, the board and senior leaders reviewed the 5-year strategy. They kept the 2030 aspiration, to be Kentucky's easiest and most-trusted place to bank, and the five pillars:

- People as Problem Solvers
- Community-Integrated Financial Services
- Accessibility Across Channels
- Financial Strength for Innovation
- Regional Economic Development

They made these adjustments:

- Branches expand alongside digital service, starting in the Greater Louisville area and then connecting toward Danville.
- Self-service is the default for what members can safely do themselves, and it is highly usable and accessible. Accessible also means members know what they can already do.
- Rewards and tangible incentives give members a reason to move their money to Abound.
- New technology is co-created with the team, and team members reskill while it is built.
- Education and the Opportunities Abound Foundation aim to reach communities with high needs and no branch by 2030.

The financial guardrails are unchanged, and the board and senior leaders are willing to adjust them for the right opportunity.

They set aside these ideas:

- New products for high school and college students
- Retirement offerings for younger members

The strategy statement

Strengthening our Communities through Effortless, End-to-End Banking

Abound strengthens communities and improves members' lives by making banking easy to start and easy to finish through any channel.

- A member can start their journey anywhere and finish anywhere else without repeating steps.
- Self-service is the default for what members can safely do themselves, and it is highly usable and accessible.
- When staff step in to help a member, they have full context from the start.^{3, 14}

The August changes

What is Abound's winning aspiration?

UNCHANGED

By 2030, Abound is Kentucky's easiest and most-trusted place to bank, with the #1 regional market share in auto loans, mortgages, and financial education outreach.³

Where will Abound play?

UNCHANGED

Member focus Abound serves:

- Working and blue-collar families short on time
 - Active and retired military households
 - Federal civil service households
 - Young adults in the workforce
 - Small businesses and commercial members³
-

CHANGED

Geography

- The Central Kentucky core of Hardin, Jefferson, and Warren counties is unchanged, with expansion that connects markets across Central Kentucky.
- New: branch expansion alongside digital, starting in the Greater Louisville area and then connecting branches toward Danville.
- Digital-first service extends into banking deserts such as Marion County.^{3, 14}

Why: the branch study showed room to reach many more households in the Greater Louisville area and along the corridor toward Danville.¹⁰

CHANGED

Channels Self-service is the default for what members can safely do themselves, and it is highly usable and accessible. Accessible also means members know what they can already do.

These are unchanged:

- Omni-channel integration for seamless handoffs
- Digital service statewide
- Branches
- Interactive teller machines (ITMs)
- Express formats
- Extended hours, 24x7^{3, 14}

Why: some transactions carry too much risk for members to complete alone, and members need to know what is already available to them.¹⁴

UNCHANGED

Offerings Abound offers:

- Everyday and life-stage banking (deposits, credit, and money movement)
 - Financial counseling and education
 - Services that meet small-business needs³
-

How will Abound win?

CHANGED	Easy, effortless experience A member can begin in the app, on the web, by phone, in a branch, or at an ITM and finish in a different channel, with self-service that is highly usable and accessible. ^{3, 14}
UNCHANGED	Seamless handoff Highly trained staff with full context step in when it matters most, so members never restart or repeat. ³
NEW	Worth the Move Rewards and tangible incentives give members a reason to move their money to Abound. One example raised at the meeting was a cash bonus for moving a checking account. ^{3, 10} Why: moving a main account takes effort, especially for people in new markets, and everyday accounts need an incentive to move. ¹⁰
NEW	Team Co-Creation New technology is co-created with the team, and team members are retooled and reskilled in parallel with the development. ^{3, 14} Why: team members help shape a change from discovery onward, and their next roles take shape while the technology is built. ¹⁴
UNCHANGED	Community-centered Abound draws on deep roots and expertise in local communities and is committed to strengthening those communities and improving members' lives. ³
NEW	Reach Beyond Branches Education and the Opportunities Abound Foundation aim to reach communities with high needs and no branch by 2030. This aim guides choices, without committing specific grants. ^{3, 14} Why: branches will not reach every community that needs help, and Abound can still serve those communities through education. ^{14, 15}
UNCHANGED	Financial strength Strong capital, low delinquencies, and lean costs allow Abound to invest in the future. ³

What capabilities must Abound have?

The 2025 capabilities are unchanged:

- Centralized Tech Stack: shared technology infrastructure
- App & Data Integration: connected applications and data
- Experience Design: design that makes member journeys easy
- Empowered People & Culture
- Integrated Financial Guidance: financial guidance delivered when members need it³

The focus for 2027 is on real-time information, lending systems, and capacity.

FOCUS	Real-time information As of August 2026, Abound's information moved in scheduled batches, with no real-time reporting. Fraud alerts, loan answers, and reaching a member at the right moment cannot wait for the next report. ^{9, 15} Every small group emphasized lending: • Offering credit when a member needs it • Making better-informed underwriting decisions • Suggesting the right product while a member is engaged These are options for senior leaders, with no commitments made. ¹⁴
-------	--

FOCUS

Lending systems Abound is considering lending systems that help members complete applications and help staff approve more members: a mortgage application system and a replacement consumer loan system.¹³

FOCUS

Capacity In 2027, capacity to run more projects at once sets the pace, and the small groups called for building more of it.

Areas named include:

- Project management
- The lending application team
- Support for investment services

Abound also wants room to act on opportunities as they come up.¹⁴

What management systems does Abound need?

UNCHANGED

Financial guardrails The board and senior leaders kept the 2024 guardrails, a return on assets of 0.75% or above and a net worth ratio of at least 13%, and are willing to adjust them for the right opportunity.^{6, 14}

UNCHANGED

Metrics scorecards The metrics scorecards continue monthly on the strategy dashboard. As of October 2026, Abound has data to fill earlier gaps, and the CEO wants to know how much manual work each measure takes to prepare.¹⁶ Choosing how to measure the aspiration remains an open question.³

UNCHANGED

Strategy roundtables Strategy leadership checks in at least quarterly to work through key learnings, challenges, and achievements.³

UNCHANGED

Board retreats and reviews The board and senior leaders hold regular updates and discussions on strategic progress and pivots, anchored to a 5-year roadmap.³

UNCHANGED

Integrated CRM The 2025 strategy named an integrated customer relationship management (CRM) system: one system of record for member and partner interactions.³

UNCHANGED

Communication These carry the strategy across Abound:

- All-company meetings
- Department conversations
- Leadership check-ins⁴

Set aside

SET ASIDE

Products for high school and college students, including Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) students The board and senior leaders set aside these products for a later conversation about the strategy of the Opportunities Abound Foundation. Abound's financial education already reaches students from kindergarten classrooms to college campuses.^{12, 14}

SET ASIDE

Retirement offerings for younger members Retirement planning and Roth IRAs for younger members are too tactical for the priorities set in August 2026.¹⁴

From fall 2024 to fall 2026

Abound’s 5-year strategy runs from 2026 to 2030 and builds on two earlier planning cycles.³

2024: the Strategic Blueprint. At the September 2024 planning meeting, the board and senior leaders named Abound’s five pillars and set financial guardrails, including:

- A return on assets of 0.75% or above
- A net worth ratio of at least 13%

To protect the core conversion, the Blueprint called for pausing:

- Non-essential small projects while it was under way
- New branch openings from January to August 2026⁶

2025: a sharper choice. The strategy became “Strengthening our Communities through Effortless, End-to-End Banking,” with the aspiration to be Kentucky’s easiest and most-trusted place to bank by 2030.³ Abound’s main point of difference moved from high-touch speed and education leadership to ease from start to finish across channels, with education and human guidance built on top.⁵

2026: putting the new core system to work. The core conversion went live in June 2026.¹ In June 2026, Abound’s CEO framed the central strategic question as how Abound uses the new core system to make banking more accessible while balancing growth and scale.⁷ The August planning meeting answered part of that question and carried the rest into 2027.

Progress on earlier commitments

DONE	Core conversion The 2024 Blueprint called for pausing non-essential small projects to protect the conversion. The new core system went live in June 2026, and follow-up work on it continues. ^{1, 6, 13}
MET	Financial guardrails The 2024 Blueprint set return on assets at 0.75% or above, down from a 1% target, so Abound could accept a lower return while increasing member value and community impact. In August 2026: • Return on assets was 1.02% for the year to date. • The net worth ratio was 15.85% against a 13% floor.^{1, 6}
IN PLACE	Metrics scorecards The 2025 strategy called for metrics scorecards and a way to measure the aspiration. Abound has tracked the scorecards’ measures, including loan disbursement rates, monthly on the strategy dashboard since January 2026. ^{1, 3, 4}
IN PROGRESS	First member journeys The 2025 strategy work named the first journeys to make easy: • Joining and funding an account • Auto loans • Mortgages⁵ In June 2026, 36% of the digital account applications members started were funded, compared with 59% across all channels. Digital loan applications were disbursed far less often than branch applications. ¹

IN PLACE

Community giving The 2024 Blueprint called for more commitment to the charitable donation account, an investment portfolio used to support eligible charities and the Opportunities Abound Foundation.^{6, 12}

- In 2025, the account earned about \$489,000.
- For 2025, the foundation and community impact presentation reported \$533,000 in community support and donations, above the account's stated charitable-distribution benchmark of about \$249,000.¹²

SCHEDULED

Integrated CRM The 2025 strategy named an integrated CRM.³ As of August 2026, the project was scheduled to begin in December 2026.⁹

Lending systems. The lending presentation described potential investments in:

- A mortgage application system that would let members complete more of the process themselves
- A replacement consumer loan system that could help Abound approve more members¹³

Both appear in the project plans submitted to senior leaders for review in October 2026. The consumer loan system is an 18-month to two-year project.¹⁶

November plans. As of August 2026, the board was scheduled to see the written branch plan and a clearer data plan in November 2026.¹⁰

The questions behind the 2026 choices

In June 2026, Abound's CEO answered a set of strategic questions, naming the questions in front of Abound and describing Abound's AI roadmap.⁷ Here is where each stood after the August 2026 planning meeting.

PARTLY ANSWERED

How does Abound use the new core system to make banking more accessible as it grows? Self-service is the default for what members can safely do themselves, and it is highly usable and accessible. Branches expand alongside digital.¹⁴ Ideas for using real-time information returned to senior leaders as options.

PARTLY ANSWERED

How fast, and where, will Abound add branches? Branches expand alongside digital, starting in the Greater Louisville area and then connecting toward Danville.¹⁴ Abound's long-range plan calls for one to three new branches a year.⁷ As of August 2026, the board was scheduled to see the written branch plan in November 2026.¹⁰

PARTLY ANSWERED

Where does friction keep engaged members from deepening their relationship with Abound? Rewards and tangible incentives give members a reason to move their money to Abound.¹⁴ What counts as a primary relationship (direct deposit, or something else) was an open question in June.⁷

OPEN

How far will Abound automate lending? As of August 2026, about 20% of consumer loan decisions were automatic, and underwriters reviewed every application before any decline.¹³

PARTLY ANSWERED

Where will leadership focus and investment earn a long-term return in member loyalty and growth? The meeting recorded flexibility in the guardrails for new opportunities and named places to invest:

- Capacity to run more projects at once
- Branch expansion
- Lending

It did not rank them.¹⁴

OPEN

How will AI change banking, and Abound's place in it? Abound's AI roadmap moves through these stages:

1. Expanding digital service, including a first member-facing AI use
2. AI built into credit, fraud, marketing, and operations
3. Member-facing and staff-facing AI that draws on the same information and supports decisions in near real time⁷

At the meeting, participants asked:

- How to turn AI ideas into practice
- How AI will change the work team members do and the workforce Abound needs
- How outside partners fit
- How AI work can run on real-time data^{10, 15}

The five pillars

People as Problem Solvers

Abound equips staff to diagnose, decide, and finish member issues end to end when a standard solution doesn't fit.

2026 LEARNING

Abound's people carried the core conversion with a discipline participants called "slow is fast," choosing readiness over speed. Participants named organizational alignment and collaboration as a strength, and no managers left Abound from June through August 2026.^{1, 15}

2027 FOCUS

Team members help shape new technology from the start and reskill alongside it. The small groups called for more capacity in project management, the lending application team, and support for investment services.¹⁴

Community-Integrated Financial Services

Abound embeds in its communities to gain local insight, partner effectively, and earn durable trust.

2026 LEARNING

In the first half of 2026, Abound's financial education reached 15,840 people. In the six months before the planning meeting, 160 team members helped deliver it, from kindergarten classrooms to college campuses.¹²

2027 FOCUS

Education and the Opportunities Abound Foundation work toward the 2030 aim of reaching communities with high needs and no branch.

Accessibility Across Channels

Abound makes it simple to start anywhere and finish anywhere (digital, branch, ITM, or phone) without repeating steps.

2026 LEARNING

Digital use grew, and the gaps became clearer.

- Among applicants with credit scores of 650 or higher, monthly digital loan applications rose from 359 in December 2025 to 487 in September 2026.
- From June through September, about a quarter to a third of those digital applications were disbursed within 30 days each month, compared with about seven in ten branch applications.¹
- A separate review of 1,040 rejected digital applications from March 1 through July 31, 2026, found that about three quarters listed collateral or insufficient income as the reason.²

The question widened from how the application works to what members want to finance and what their finances can support.

Financial Strength for Innovation

Abound uses its balance-sheet strength to take calculated risks and fund long-term improvements that raise member value.

2026 LEARNING

Since 2011, Abound's net worth ratio has generally stayed above 15%, and its return on assets has averaged 1.3%. Continuing at about a 1% return and 8% annual growth would bring Abound to \$3.85 billion in assets by 2030, with capital above 15%.

A lower return is a lever. It can fund:

- Higher operating expenses
- Higher deposit rates
- Faster market expansion
- Lower loan rates
- Larger loan-loss provisions⁸

Participants gave their own estimates, and the forecast built from their averages, about a 0.75% return on assets and 9.5% annual asset growth, reaches a little over \$4 billion in assets by 2030, with net worth a little over 14%.¹¹

2027 FOCUS

- Self-service becomes more usable and accessible.
- Members learn what they can already do.
- Abound considers the lending systems.

2027 FOCUS

The 2024 guardrails are unchanged:

- A return on assets of 0.75% or above
- A net worth ratio of at least 13%

For the right opportunity, the board and senior leaders are willing to adjust them, for example to a 0.60% return on assets and a net worth ratio of 12% to 15%.¹⁴

Regional Economic Development

Abound aligns its growth with regional prosperity, investing in ways that expand opportunity for members and communities.

2026 LEARNING

In Experian data presented in August 2026, members who already have an Abound loan held nearly \$5 billion in similar loans at other institutions. Abound’s own loan portfolio was about \$2 billion.¹³

2027 FOCUS

Branches and data work together. Branches bring Abound within reach of more households, and data and technology help Abound earn a larger share of each member’s banking.¹⁵

Sources

- 1. Abound strategy dashboard, monthly data reported by Abound staff: net worth ratio, return on assets, and management departures through August 2026; loan applications and 30-day disbursement rates for applicants with credit scores of 650 or higher through September 2026; digital account opening, June 2026; 2024 return-on-assets baseline.
- 2. Abound analysis of digital loan applications with a loan-officer rejection, March 1 to July 31, 2026, shared August 21, 2026.
- 3. Abound 5-year strategy: Strategy on a Page (2025), with the adjustments approved at the planning meeting on August 29, 2026.
- 4. Abound Strategy, Making Banking Easy (draft), September 19, 2025.
- 5. Abound 2025 Strategy Summary Deck (draft), 2025.
- 6. Abound Strategic Blueprint 2025 to 2030, September 23, 2024.
- 7. The CEO’s answers to strategic questions, June 30, 2026.
- 8. Notes from the financial performance and five-year forecast discussion, planning meeting, August 28, 2026.
- 9. Making banking easier presentation, planning meeting, August 28, 2026.
- 10. Notes from the small-group report-backs, branch study discussion, and day recap, planning meeting, August 28, 2026.
- 11. Five-year forecast presented by Abound’s CFO, planning meeting, August 29, 2026.
- 12. Foundation and community impact presentation, planning meeting, August 29, 2026.
- 13. Lending presentation, planning meeting, August 29, 2026, citing Experian data on Abound members with an active Abound loan.
- 14. Notes from the planning meeting discussion, August 29, 2026: review of proposed adjustments, small-group report-backs, and the financial guardrails discussion.
- 15. Planning meeting closing deck, August 29, 2026.
- 16. Notes from the planning follow-up conversation, October 8, 2026.

Abound Credit Union strategy resources. Draft for review, October 2026.