

MMUA

Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2025

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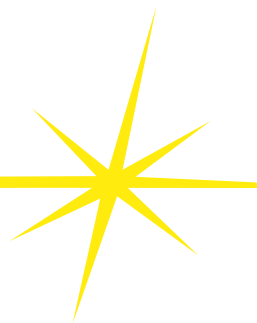


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PUBLIC UTILITIES



WHO WE ARE

MMUA is a nonprofit member-led trade association representing the interests of the state’s municipal utility systems. Together with the thousands of community leaders and volunteers who are dedicating their lives to ensuring their neighbors and friends have reliable, affordable, and sustainable services, we work to promote the value of community ownership and to assist them in achieving excellence.



Our Vision

MMUA’s vision is to be a nationally recognized leader in advocacy, bringing value to municipal utilities, and enhancing their position in the industry.



Our Mission

Our mission is to unify, support, and serve as a common voice for municipal utilities.



Our History

MMUA was founded in 1931 primarily as an organization representing municipal electrical utilities. Over time, its mission expanded to serving the communities which operate utilities of all types including electric, gas, water, wastewater, storm sewer, and more. The Association hired its first paid consultant in the 1960s and its first full time staff member in the 1970s. The organization provides services on which members depend, and it represents their interests in the many venues where laws and regulations are developed and enforced.



Our Values

People

We practice respect, demonstrate leadership, and encourage growth through education and training.

Safety

We are safety-driven at all times, and we work to instill a safety culture in all municipal operations.

Advocacy

We strive to be an articulate and powerful voice on the issues.

Teamwork

Working together, we accomplish what would be impossible alone.

Communication

We listen carefully, and we speak respectfully and truthfully.

Creativity

We find new solutions to meet new challenges.

Dedication

We do whatever it takes to help our members get the job done.

Integrity

We behave in a manner that is honest, trustworthy, reliable, and fiscally responsible.

Environment

We support the efficient use of resources and sustainable energy.

PLANNING PROCESS

For more than ninety years, MMUA has consistently evolved to meet the needs of its members. During that time MMUA has always benefitted from spirited input supplied by members, strong leadership at the Board level, and knowledgeable staff.



Julie Kennedy
MMUA Board President 2023-24
Grand Rapids Public Utilities



Scott Grabe
MMUA Board President 2024-25
City of Staples



Karleen Kos
MMUA CEO

In late 2021 MMUA engaged a new staff leader, its first in nearly thirty years. During the search, many activities involved in clarifying the association's needs set the stage for the strategic planning process that followed. Once on board the new CEO, together with the Board of Directors and the entire MMUA staff, undertook a series of additional actions aimed at ensuring the relevant voices were represented and due diligence had occurred. We:

- Conducted surveys of all members and staff
- Reviewed data from member and nonmember municipal utilities
- Met extensively with members
- Consulted notes from previous meetings with members
- Referred to the strategic plans and processes from related organizations in the utilities space
- Surveyed available information related to the forces impacting utilities in general and municipal utilities in particular

With all this information in mind, the staff and Board have engaged in multi-day planning sessions to determine the path forward that will best serve our members and strengthen our association in the coming years. The Board of Directors approved this plan in June 2022 and has updated it annually since.

TO BE A LEADER

MMUA has been an association leader for municipal utilities for decades. Both within the state of Minnesota and on the national stage, we have served as a trusted source for answers and expertise, for products and services that meet the needs of municipal utilities, and for a spirit of collaboration and problem-solving.



This strategic plan is designed to enhance our leadership position and foster growth while focusing intently on the needs of municipal utilities, in Minnesota primarily, though we are willing to extend our reach beyond its borders where we can uniquely and cost-effectively bring value that is needed by municipals elsewhere. To that end, our plan is intended to achieve the following:

- MMUA is a trusted resource for helping utilities navigate the process of change that is currently underway related to the evolution of energy sources, water supply and contamination issues, population shifts, and the ever-evolving regulatory environment.
- Municipal utilities professionals, the communities they serve, and the policy makers who serve them all have MMUA as their top-of-mind resource in matters concerning the success of those utilities.
- MMUA programs and services extend beyond the familiar domains of electrical and gas services to address unmet needs in the water, wastewater, storm sewer, broadband, and related municipal utility domains.
- MMUA members are knowledgeable about the value for the investment of their dues and service dollars spent with MMUA.
- MMUA is known for delivering positive results programmatically, legislatively, and interpersonally.
- MMUA is fiscally sound with an adequate operating reserve and is positioned to seize opportunities for growth without threatening operational stability.

STRATEGIC PILLARS



Effective Public Policy Advocacy (PPA)

MMUA's Strategic Plan sets the following goals for the next five years related to effective public policy advocacy.

1. MMUA's government relations and policy efforts will focus on maximizing positive results and limiting negative impacts for all utility services at the state legislative and regulatory levels based on priorities developed annually considering both ongoing and emerging issues.
2. MMUA will work collaboratively with and through allied organizations to influence national and local policies and to solve problems of mutual concern.
3. MMUA will maintain and improve its library of tools, references, and data to support municipal utility leaders in successfully navigating evolving regulations and maximizing resources that may be available to their communities.
4. MMUA will offer a series of regional meetings and disseminate informational videos, position documents, best practice guidance, and action alerts aimed at engaging local leaders in active participation related to municipal utility policy needs.
5. MMUA will develop and execute a comprehensive communications strategy aimed at educating elected leaders and the public regarding the value of municipal utilities, encouraging them to take actions which strengthen these important public assets.



Strategic Preservation of Local Control (LC)

MMUA's Strategic Plan sets the following goals for the next five years related to the strategic preservation of local control of utility services.

1. MMUA will champion the three pillars of future utility success: reliability, affordability, and sustainability, within the municipal model.
2. MMUA will develop and deploy a comprehensive communications strategy to engage members and, when appropriate, directly interact in their communities in articulating the value of local ownership and continuously evolving their utilities for the changing times.
3. MMUA will design and offer a series of resources aimed at helping communities value their assets and sustaining local control when that is the will of the majority of ratepayers, while assisting utilities staff in dealing with regulatory issues that complicate local control, developing their workforces, and improving customer connections and loyalty.
4. MMUA will prepare and implement one or more tools empowering local leaders to effectively evaluate and communicate regarding alternative ownership options if they are presented, remaining ever-mindful of the value of local municipal ownership and control.



Excellence in Member Benefits (MB)

MMUA's Strategic Plan sets the following goals for the next five years for the creation and maintenance of exemplary, cost-effective benefits for all members.

1. MMUA will explore and implement benefit programs that are valuable for members representing utilities of all types.
2. MMUA will offer the means for peer- and interest-specific networking groups to easily identify and connect with one another.
3. MMUA will encourage and measure member engagement through a variety of traditional and innovative offerings that result in increased perception of MMUA's relevance to utilities of all types.
4. MMUA will evaluate the current and evolving needs of members and the technology platforms, updating current software and introducing additional or alternative solutions that improve ROI on the membership investment.
5. MMUA will evaluate its dues structure and educate members regarding the values of their dues dollars.
6. MMUA will devise offerings such as data collection/comparison/dissemination, council/commission education, and offerings for ratepayers/general public that extend MMUA value to members' stakeholders.
7. MMUA will provide associate members with opportunities to participate in the life of the organization in a manner that maximizes ROI for them and helps support MMUA programs.



Best-in-Class Programs and Services (PS)

MMUA's Strategic Plan sets the following goals for the next five years with the intention of building and maintaining best-in-class services that promote excellence, safety, and ever-evolving proficiency for all municipal utilities employees.

1. MMUA will continuously evolve its successful safety, job training, apprenticeship, and related programs and facilities to ensure they meet the ever-evolving needs of members and clients, are flexible in changing circumstances, and are fiscally sustainable for all concerned.
2. MMUA will enhance current and future programming with more effective communication tools, transparency, and evaluation measurements, so that relevant programs are continuously improved and those no longer needed are sunsetted in a timely manner.
3. MMUA will develop new services tailored to the needs of municipal utilities of all types using traditional and nontraditional modes of delivery, ensuring that all offerings are affordable and sustainable for everyone.
4. MMUA will continue to work with and through partner organizations to collaboratively develop and deliver programming that enhances the Association's reach and relevance.
5. MMUA will implement a capital replacement and investment process to ensure its training and office facilities consistently align with the requirements for mission delivery.

FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR



Efficient Association Operations (AO)

MMUA's Strategic Plan sets the following goals for the next five years with the intent of creating efficient association operations staffed by increasingly competent and forward-looking professionals.

1. MMUA will implement its organization-level and individual staff development plans to ensure our staff is competent as evidenced both by the attainment or maintenance of necessary credentials and by achieving key performance indicators each year.
2. MMUA will devise and implement a strategy for clarifying and marketing its brand to relevant audiences and positioning the organization as a leader in the relevant venues.
3. MMUA will continually update its governance and operating procedures to ensure they are relevant to the evolving organization and suitable for managing the risks inherent in delivering on our mission.
4. MMUA will leverage partnerships with allies and service organizations to meet the needs of members and operate the organization efficiently and cost-effectively.
5. MMUA will increase its focus on grant funding to enhance its own mission delivery and to assist members in receiving these funds when appropriate for their communities' needs.
6. MMUA will update its operating reserve and investment policies to reflect the most prudent path forward in light of the Association's priorities and external exigencies.



OPERATIONAL PLANNING, REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

PLANNING



Each year the Board and CEO will review the organization's SWOT, strategic, and operational progress in June. At that time the strategic plan will be updated. In August, the coming year's operating priorities will be set, and a provisional dues plan will be proposed to the membership for approval at the annual membership meeting. Open comment from the membership will be encouraged in an annual Board listening session prior to the vote on the provisional dues.

Following the vote and direction from the Board, the CEO will create an annual operating plan. This plan will include specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely goals based on the operating priorities and strategic intent of the Board. The annual budget will be developed to support the successful realization of the operating plan, and the Audit and Finance Committee will review the budget prior to referral to the Board for a vote in December. If the provisional dues rate proves untenable because of changing circumstances, another membership meeting will be called in the last quarter of the year for the purpose of approving dues.

REPORTING



The CEO will report on the status of each approved goal/deliverable in a document prepared for the Board quarterly (October, January, April, July). Items requiring Board action will be placed on the agenda of the next Board meeting.

STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY



A success sharing structure incentivizes high performance and accountability from the staff to achieve the objectives in this plan. Each member of the staff will have professional development plans that are tied to the success sharing structure. Success sharing rewards both individual performance and organizational attainment of the operational/financial goals as approved by the Board as part of the budgeting process.

VOLUNTEER ACCOUNTABILITY



It is important to recognize that some of the goals/objectives in this plan will require assistance from Board members and other volunteers. The President and the Committee Chairs will need to work closely with staff and the volunteer groups they lead to ensure goals are met. When goals are met, MMUA advances its mission and member utilities are strengthened. That is the definition of success.



CONTACT US



600 Highway 169 South • Suite 701 •
St. Louis Park, MN 55426



763.551.1230
Toll Free 800.422.0119



kkos@mmua.org

WWW.MMUA.ORG



*Hometown services. Hometown strengths.
Hometown solutions.*