



# PREPARING TO MEET THE FUTURE WITH STRENGTH AND PURPOSE

Strategic Plan | 2021 – 2023



Pennsylvania Municipal  
**League**



**S**ince its founding 120 years ago, the Pennsylvania Municipal League has performed a vital role in serving, supporting and strengthening local leaders across the Commonwealth's diverse municipalities.

Local governments are now being severely tested as they contend with a convergence of unprecedented public health, social and economic crises, and the need to address their longer-term impacts. Doing so will require new levels of collaboration, innovative thinking and skillful leadership.

The League is committed to standing with the Commonwealth's municipalities and working tirelessly to ensure that they have a strong, proactive voice in Harrisburg, and the knowledge and support needed to effectively serve their residents.

## **ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

The League has long recognized that a well-crafted strategic plan is essential to charting a successful future. Over the past three years, it has focused on implementing the priorities articulated in its previous strategic plan, with notable results. It is now poised to build on those achievements.

**This three-year plan is the product of a thoughtful and collaborative process that was led by a planning group composed of The League's Board of Directors and senior staff.** The process was structured and facilitated by 2B Communications & Strategy Group, a national consulting firm with extensive experience working with municipal leagues and other associations.

The planning process began just as the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Despite the massive disruption that quickly ensued, the planning group worked diligently to maintain a big picture perspective and challenged themselves to think beyond the immediate circumstances. Not surprisingly, the complexity and urgency of the times helped to surface important issues that may not otherwise have been considered.

**Ultimately, the plan reflects The League's unwavering commitment to its members and to doing "whatever it takes" to meet their current and future needs.**

## Key Planning Steps

The planning process took place from February to October 2020 and included:

- **Research:** Board officer and senior staff interviews, online surveys targeting The League's full membership, associate members and Business Leaders Network.
- **Operational Review:** Multi-year trend analyses of The League's membership, conference and event attendance, training participation, communications and media analytics, municipal service programs, and financials.
- **Plan Development:** A virtual presentation and discussion of the research findings and operational review involving the Board and staff; two virtual small group working sessions; development of the plan framework with input by Board and staff.

**The plan was unanimously approved by The League's Board on October 28, 2020.**

To guide the plan's implementation, The League's staff develop annual priorities and Key Performance Indicators, which will be used to monitor and measure progress.

## TOUCHSTONES

The plan is designed to support and advance The League's mission, and to align with the core values, which were updated by the planning group. The core values reflect The League's operating philosophy and inform and infuse everything it does.

### Our Mission:

*To strengthen, empower and advocate for effective local government.*

### Our Core Values:

- **Local Governance:** We believe that local authority and autonomy are central to effective municipal government and we are fully committed to their protection, preservation and advancement.
- **Non-Partisan:** We welcome and respect the perspectives of all elected and appointed officials without regard to their political affiliation.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** We value the diversity of our members and the people they serve, and are dedicated to ensuring equal respect, recognition, fairness, and access to opportunity for everyone.
- **Leadership:** We understand that highly-competent current and future local leaders are vital and we proactively support their ongoing development.
- **Service:** We listen to our members and ensure that their priorities, needs and satisfaction drive what we do.
- **Collaboration:** We work to enhance all municipalities through alliances with public entities, organizations, businesses and educational institutions.
- **Innovation:** We embrace the need to find and develop new ideas and solutions to help local governments increase their adaptability, effectiveness and impact.
- **Fiscal Integrity:** We believe that accountability, transparency and the responsible management of resources are essential for both our association and local government.



## PLANNING CONTEXT

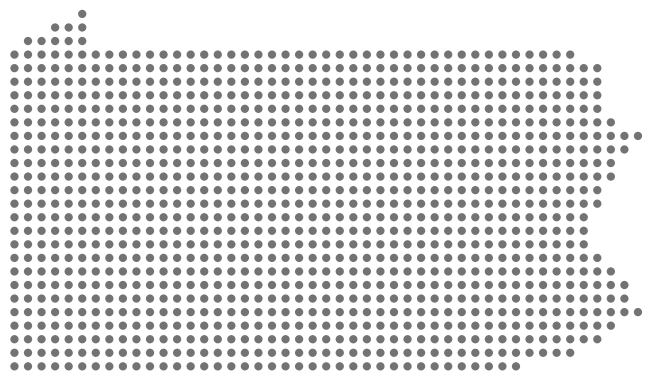
Information from a wide range of stakeholders and data sources was gathered to ensure that the strategic plan is reality-based and addresses the needs and opportunities that both the Board and staff believe are essential to The League's future.

### Key Takeaways: The League Today

- Membership is strong and has grown over the past three years.
- Increasing member engagement across The League is viewed as a key priority.
- Member satisfaction is high, with advocacy topping the list of highly-valued benefits.
- Conferences and educational programs are well-attended and receive positive ratings.
- PELRAS is the go-to for municipalities across the Commonwealth and anchors a valued line-up of municipal service program offerings.
- Technology capacity is expanding to enable full-featured virtual programming and to enhance The League's ability to deliver an excellent member experience.
- District-level activities need to continue to evolve to attract more participation.
- There is a strong commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.
- The League is financially healthy and is in alignment with sector best practices.
- An Executive Director transition is on the horizon in 2021.

### **This plan builds from a place of strength.**

As underscored by the data and planning discussions, municipalities are facing tremendous challenges. Using this plan as its roadmap, The League will help its members navigate successfully into the future by building on the positive reputation, expertise and foundation that it has built over decades.



# Strategic Plan | 2021 – 2023



The following goals and strategies articulate what The League aspires to achieve over the next three years and how it will get there.

GOALS	Strategies
<p><b>ADVOCACY GOAL</b> Strengthen Pennsylvania municipalities through proactive, bold and sustained advocacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create and implement a new member-informed model for policy development and advocacy that includes a topically-focused committee structure.</li> <li>▪ Increase Board, Legislative Committee and member involvement by expanding year-round advocacy and policy education/training, programming and communications.</li> <li>▪ Continue to build relationships with state and federal lawmakers and officials by increasing our presence and serving as a resource on the issues that impact municipalities.</li> <li>▪ Update and release a new “platform” publication that identifies and updates key municipal financing issues facing municipalities and puts forth potential solutions.</li> <li>▪ Broaden the collection and use of data to support policy and advocacy efforts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOAL</b> Equip municipal leaders with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively address the emerging and enduring challenges facing local governments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase access to The League’s conferences and educational programming by expanding our online delivery capacity and expertise.</li> <li>▪ Continue to evaluate, improve and grow our professional development offerings, including the online training library.</li> <li>▪ Maintain contact with the Commonwealth to sustain and expand specialty trainings.</li> <li>▪ Launch a leadership training program focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.</li> <li>▪ Explore offering a Human Resource certification program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SERVICES GOAL</b> Help municipalities optimize their operations by providing high-quality service programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain a current understanding of municipalities’ needs and provide best-in-class services including PELRAS, Municipal Utility Alliance, and others.</li> <li>▪ Enhance PennPRIME’s offerings and align more closely with The League.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ENGAGEMENT GOAL</b> Deepen engagement and ownership across our membership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update governance training, programming and processes to ensure a robust leadership pipeline and to increase Board engagement and accountability.</li> <li>▪ Attract greater attendance at District convenings by implementing sustained in-person and online meetings and programming.</li> <li>▪ Develop a new member onboarding program that establishes an immediate connection with elected and appointed officials and helps facilitate their involvement in League activities (e.g., Annual Summit, PELRAS).</li> <li>▪ Continue to identify and grow meaningful involvement opportunities for the Business Leaders Network.</li> <li>▪ Involve members in the creation of a new 10-Year Vision for The League.</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPERATIONAL GOAL</b> Maximize our organizational effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and financial health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to build a diverse membership from throughout the Commonwealth.</li> <li>▪ Fully implement an integrated data management and technology strategy.</li> <li>▪ Deploy strategic communications to further the priorities of municipalities and increase member engagement.</li> <li>▪ Orchestrate a successful Executive Director leadership transition, and undertake succession planning for other key positions.</li> <li>▪ Conduct an audit to confirm current roles and update staffing structure/functions as needed to implement the plan.</li> <li>▪ Maintain strong financial and operational policies and practices.</li> <li>▪ Implement ongoing planning and evaluation practices involving both the Board and staff.</li> <li>▪ Integrate diversity, equity and inclusion efforts throughout The League.</li> <li>▪ Continue to attract and retain highly qualified staff and facilitate a collaborative and healthy work environment, including providing timely and topical staff trainings.</li> </ul>

**T**hank you to The League's Board of Directors and staff for your visionary leadership and active engagement throughout the strategic planning process.

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