

Guiding Principles

COLLABORATION

Establishing Priorities

Strengthening
Communications

Member Engagement Strategies

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

ADVOCATE support excellence

LEADERSHIP



STRATEGIC
BUSINESS PLAN

2025

BENCHMARKING

Local Governance

SERVESTRONG

IMPLEMENTATION

Website

Migration

Expanding

Database

FISCAL INTEGRITY

Promoting

Civility

Explore

Online

Training

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MAINE MUNICIPAL
ASSOCIATION SINCE 1936

Thank you for being a valued member of the Maine Municipal Association and your ongoing support. MMA continues to provide municipal leaders with a variety of services from education, advocacy, and legal guidance to insurance products designed to protect property taxpayer investments, as well as the health and wellbeing of municipal employees.

Each September the association's Executive Committee (EC) convenes in the president's hometown for a two-day session to set the priorities for the upcoming year. The following *2025 Strategic Business Plan - Goals, Commitments & Focus Areas* report provides a summary of our directives and priorities for 2025.

As you will read, many of the association's directives are based on the feedback provided by municipal officials who participated in the June member engagement survey. As a result, in the coming year MMA staff will focus on six initiatives that range in scope from strengthening the way staff communicates with its members and exploring online training options, to increasing civility in public discourse.

We are also taking an opportunity to celebrate our successes. Undoubtedly, 2024 was a productive year for the association and its Executive Committee, and we hope our members benefited from the resulting improvements.

One of the most notable accomplishments this past year was the launch of the ServeStrong program in partnership with the National League of Cities (NLC) and NLC- Risk Information Sharing Consortium. This web-based platform, including access to the Talkspace portal, provides behavioral health resources tailored specifically for first responders.

But that is not all.

In 2024, the advocacy team tracked over 300 pieces of legislation affecting municipal government operations during the second legislative session; the educational services staff coordinated 37 workshops and conferences for MMA members, and 117 workshops for affiliate associations; the legal team responded to over 6,000 inquiries from members, a testament to the critical role MMA plays in helping local governments navigate complex legal landscapes; our human resources professionals reimagined its online presence to make personnel management related resources more accessible to our members; risk management services staff managed a record number of severe weather-related claims, highlighting their critical role in helping municipalities recover from disasters; and the health trust services team delivered several positive changes for members, including an increase in the life insurance benefit at no additional cost to members.

We want to express my gratitude once again to the Executive Committee, as well as to our members, incredible staff, and our long-serving employees. Together, we have achieved so much, and together, we will achieve even more in the years ahead.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and dedication to our shared mission. Let's move forward with confidence, knowing that our best days are yet to come.

Thank you.

2025 Strategic Business Plan - Goals, Commitments & Focus Areas

Establishing Priorities.

Annually, the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) goals, commitments, and focus areas are developed by the Executive Committee (EC) during its September two-day planning session. Those discussions provide the framework used by the Strategic & Finance Committee (SFC), a subcommittee of EC that is chaired by the vice president, to develop a preliminary budget proposal. Once the SFC's work is complete, the proposed budget is discussed, amended as necessary, and finally adopted by the Executive Committee at its December meeting.

Guiding Principles.

Throughout the budget adoption and implementation process, three principles guide the association's work, which include: (1) maintaining and enhancing MMA's direct member services and relations; (2) building and fostering a strong and effective municipal role in the intergovernmental system; and (3) maintaining the sound and transparent organizational, financial, technological and operational services necessary to meet current and future needs of MMA's members.



Benchmarking.

In addition to supporting the legal, education and training, advocacy, employee benefits, and risk management services our members need, the budget acts as the roadmap for implementing the association's goals, honoring the commitments made to our members, and focusing on key opportunities. The EC directives found within the budget also provide valuable benchmarks for evaluating MMA's performance in meeting members' needs.

2025 Strategic Goals.

At the direction of the EC, in June of 2024 MMA conducted a member engagement survey designed with two goals in mind: (1) to gauge our members' experience with the association and their evolving needs; and (2) to assess whether the initiatives and changes implemented by MMA over the last two years have met member expectations.

While the survey results indicated that the association and staff do a good job at meeting the needs of its members, some themes for improvement were identified by the EC and staff and serve as the foundation for the 2025 strategic plan. Strengthening MMA communications with our members, facilitating website navigation, expanding database capabilities, exploring online training options, reviewing executive committee representation, and promoting civility in public discourse are the priorities for the coming year.

- **Strengthening Communications.** MMA is aware that our members are inundated daily with a barrage of emails and recognizes that the association contributes to the volume. As a result, over the course of 2025 staff will work to better consolidate and coordinate MMA-wide communications with our members. That approach will include better use of social media to push information out to our members on an established topic related schedule. For example, using Mondays to issue risk management updates and Tuesdays to describe what is new in legal, and so on.
- **Facilitating Website Navigation.** Although the end goal will be phased-in over the course of several years, MMA will take the first step in exploring the use of a closed loop AI system. The goal is to help members find information more

easily by pushing curated MMA resources on a variety of subjects, rather than requiring users to pull information from several areas of the website. The goal is to provide a one-stop location for information based on a user's search criteria. Adding topic specific portals on the website, such as the cybersecurity and personnel management prototypes currently in the development stage, will provide members with checklists and summaries that can be utilized to gain step-by-step information on how to respond to a particular issue.

- **Expanding MMA Database Capabilities.** MMA will seek opportunities to maximize the use of the features available in Personify, MMA's database platform, to expand communication tools across the organization, including the implementation of "communities" that will enable appointed and elected officials to electronically interact with their peers, post and share information, and discuss issues and solutions. Additionally, other administrative functions such as abiding with document retention policies, logging and tracking responses to public document requests, and moderating email use can be facilitated via Personify. While funding is the primary challenge for expanding the use of the program, replacement of other products, like MailChimp, will help offset costs.
- **Exploring Online Training Options.** Based on the popularity of online training among our members, MMA will explore the use of a Learning Management System. These systems, like Risk Management Services' online training program (Neogov), provide users with the opportunity to participate in training as available, track and catalogue training records, and provide immediate feedback to members regarding opportunities for more targeted online training related to job responsibilities. The association will also explore avenues for providing more time-sensitive training on emerging topics, through the use of 30-minute "lunch and learn" sessions, for example.
- **Reviewing Executive Committee Representation.** In 2025 MMA staff will undertake an effort to compare representation on MMA's Executive Committee with the membership on executive boards in other state leagues and associations. An informal survey of other states shows that while MMA is not alone in policies that limit el-



igible EC candidates to town and city managers/administrators and elected officers, in some states affiliate group representatives, as well as municipal employees are eligible to serve on the governing committee. A report highlighting options and recommendations will be presented to the EC for its consideration.

- **Promoting Civility in Public Discourse.** Programs promoting civility in municipalities and associations often focus on fostering respectful communication, ethical governance, and conflict resolution within local governments and between government officials and their constituents. MMA learned that some state leagues have created toolkits for their work on civility, which involved bundling all available resources under one "umbrella," in a fashion akin to what is envisioned in the database and online training goals described above. MMA will explore options for bundling existing related services, as well as avenues to round out current offerings, and commence the work necessary to develop a civility portal for our members' use.

2024 Accomplishments

The annual strategic planning process also provides the opportunity to review the successes and challenges of the previous year. This past year was no exception, as under the guidance of the EC, MMA staff continued to innovate and adapt to meet the needs of our members and have achieved milestones that distinguish us from other state leagues and associations. Over the course of 2024 MMA implemented three core goals.

1. Website Migration.

MMA completed the implementation of the new website platform, which included moving Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust website to the new platform as well as beginning the process of transitioning several of our affiliate group websites to the new platform. By moving all users to one platform, MMA is better situated to make improvements to the functionality of all websites across the organization.

2. ServeStrong Implementation.

One of our most significant accomplishments was the implementation of the **ServeStrong** program. As approved by the Executive Committee in 2023, this initiative, in partnership with the National League of Cities (NLC) and NLC-Risk Information Sharing Consortium, provides a web-based platform, including access to the Talkspace portal, as well as on-demand access to behavioral health resources tailored specifically for first responders. The launch of the program was a collaborative approach among many MMA departments, whose combined efforts led to the successful implementation of the program. Within the first week of the launch, ServeStrong had several subscribers, reflecting its need and immediate impact. This program exemplifies MMA's dedication to addressing the unique challenges faced by municipal employees, particularly those in high-stress roles.

3. Robust Member Engagement Strategies.

MMA staff successfully responded to the direction to implement a more robust interaction strategy for members, including a membership engagement survey, which as noted above pro-

vided the foundation for the development of the association's 2025 goals and priorities. In addition, MMA conducted two "MMA for a Day" sessions with the inaugural event taking place in Farmington in April and the second in Machias in November. The sessions were designed to bring MMA programs and staff to areas across the state with the goal of meeting municipal leaders where they are. Both sessions were well received and appreciated by attendees. Additionally, the association's advocacy staff held regional meetings throughout Maine in the fall of 2024 to facilitate communication between municipal officials and candidates for the Maine State Legislature.

In addition to implementing the Executive Committee's three key policy priorities, each department continued to deliver many important products and services to our members, which are described below.

Administrative, Financial & Information Technology Services

- Implemented Risk Management Services policy and claims platform and Personify upgrades.
- Conducted a HIPPA compliance assessment and vulnerability audit.
- Installed additional EV charging stations, a standby generator, and new roof.
- Revised several internal operational procedures including those related to conference room setup, accounts receivable, and membership database updates.

Advocacy & Communications

- Monitored over 300 pieces of second session legislation that impacted the delivery of municipal government services.
- Provided legislative updates to numerous affiliate groups.
- Published nearly 60 articles in 15 editions of the Legislative Bulletin throughout the legislative session.
- Conducted a series of regional meetings intended to get municipal and state leaders in the same room to discuss issues and opportunities for collaboration.

- Continued to monitor the effectiveness of MMA's modernized website and to advance improvements as feedback is provided.
- Implemented the migration of the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust website and commenced migration of affiliate group websites onto MMA's new platform.

Educational Services

- Planned and facilitated over 37 workshops and conferences for MMA members, including the 88th MMA Annual Convention.
- Planned, facilitated and supported 117 affiliate association workshops, conferences and meetings.
- Staffed and guided MMA's Education & Training Advisory Council, which celebrated its inaugural year of work in 2024.
- Onboarded the Maine Water Environment Association (MeWEA) as an affiliate group.
- Led a number of member engagement efforts, including the member engagement survey and MMA for a Day events held in Farmington and Machias.

Legal Services

- Responded to 6,000 member inquiries.
- Maintained and updated 16 searchable subject based manuals, over 60 information packets on various topics, thousands of new and archived legal notes, and numerous current issue legal guidance documents.
- Issued new revised editions of the MMA Legal Services *Tax Collectors & Treasurers* and *Municipal Officers* manuals and supplements to the *Town Meetings & Elections* and *Municipal Liens* manuals.
- Participated in 25 MMA workshops and training sessions on a variety of subjects impacting municipalities.
- Submitted two amicus briefs, both in support of the town of Bar Harbor. Each case was decided in favor of the town.

Personnel Services & Labor Relations

- Implemented minor policy revisions and adopted new policies.
- Streamlined the application process.
- Began the process of digitizing employee files.
- Created quarterly supervisory training content.
- Reviewed and updated current salary scales and job classifications.
- Began to curate more robust on-line tools for members.

Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust

- Implemented a number of changes to employer health plans, including eliminating the POS A plan, removing the primary care provider requirement from "point of service" plans, and renaming all existing health plans.
- Enhanced and increased the health promotions and field services engagement efforts.
- Implemented a new website platform.
- Complied with a state mandate to provide comprehensive coverage for fertility testing, treatment and preservation as of January 1, 2024, and selected a vendor to provide enhanced member services for 2025.
- Onboarded three new trustees.

Risk Management Services

- Upgraded the policy and claims platform.
- Implemented a successful renewal process for pool programs, including MMA's Property and Casualty Pool, Workers' Compensation Fund and Unemployment Fund.
- Expanded the line of Property & Casualty products to include Active Shooter and Malicious Attack and Terrorism and Sabotage coverage.
- Maintained quality member services, despite managing a record-breaking number of property claims associated with two catastrophic losses.
- Onboarded two new board members.



The mission of the Maine Municipal Association is to support excellence in Maine’s municipalities by providing important services and advocating for their common interests.

OUR CORE BELIEFS

LOCAL GOVERNANCE – We believe that local government is the foundation of a strong democracy and is fundamental to the provision of essential services that promote the safety, health and wellbeing of residents and communities.

LEADERSHIP – We believe in the accessibility and accountability of municipal officials, with a commitment to honesty, civility, integrity, and the highest ethical standards. Municipal officials are entrusted to develop cohesiveness and build strong future-driven communities.

COLLABORATION – We value and support opportunities for collaboration and partnerships among municipalities, public organizations, and private entities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION – We respect the uniqueness of each municipality and the diversity within the community. We are dedicated to ensuring that all individuals are treated equally, respectfully, and fairly.

FISCAL INTEGRITY – We believe financial accountability, transparency, and responsible management of resources are essential for MMA and its member municipalities.

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE – We believe in listening to and supporting member municipalities to ensure that their priorities, needs, and educational requirements are met through services and programs.