



# Strategic Plan

2013 and beyond

# Introduction

## Mission

AWC's mission is to serve our members through advocacy, education and services.

## Vision

AWC is a highly respected voice of cities and towns before the Legislature, Congress, government agencies and others. We are the leader in providing valuable services and continuing education for our membership. We are the catalyst for promoting communication between cities and towns and for developing a broad public understanding of the important roles of cities and towns across the state.

In 2009, the Board of Directors of the Association of Washington Cities unveiled a historic strategic plan. The framework for the 2009 plan was based upon a traditional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis that led to the creation of the AWC Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals.

After three years of working to accomplish nearly all of the goals and strategies of the 2009 Strategic Plan, AWC embarked upon a new approach to developing the next generation strategic plan. With a solid foundation built since 2009, this new approach used as its foundation the 2012 City Trends Report. The Trends Report, which was developed through the use of member surveys, focus groups, existing publications, and AWC staff input, identified the most pressing issues for Washington's cities now and well into the future.

In August 2012, the AWC Board came together to consider new directions and possibilities for AWC by seeking to answer the following questions:

- What is the role of city government in a quickly-evolving, dynamic, global economy? And,
- How can AWC remain relevant to our members and help cities respond to emerging trends?
- What opportunities do the trends suggest that will enable AWC to provide outstanding services to its members?

The process was both deliberative and, certainly deliberate. The updated strategic plan sums up the conclusions of that process and provides a road map for the future of this great association of cities committed to being continually relevant and of value to its members.

By way of introduction to the updated strategic plan, several important points should be noted. The first is that the AWC Mission remains the same. **Advocacy, Education and Services** is still the right one for AWC. Likewise, the Vision of being the **highly respected voice of cities, a leader in providing valuable services and continuing education, for promoting communications between cities and towns and for developing a broad public understanding of the important roles of cities and towns** remains firmly in our mind's eye. Finally and importantly our **Core Beliefs of Leadership, Excellence, Advocacy, Diversity, Education, Responsiveness, and Service** provide the foundation upon which the organization is built.

What follows are the strategic goals and components of the plan. The tasks necessary to achieve these goals will be incorporated into the AWC annual budgets and work plans over the next several years.

# Strategic Goals

## A. Reform, reset, and educate for long-term municipal fiscal sustainability. Every city and town should be assured of sufficient fiscal capacity to provide for the delivery of basic services to its citizens.

AWC is passionate about and will accomplish this goal by:

- Advocating for local control of revenue options, fiscal flexibility and viability
- Seeking to eliminate unfunded and underfunded mandates that reduce cities' ability to provide needed services

- Providing opportunities for city leaders to share and learn about new fiscal models and strategies
- Helping cities learn about and adapt to new management styles necessary for long-term fiscal sustainability

### Strategic components include:

- Continuous efforts in working with and through the Legislative Priorities Committee, other committees, and the AWC Board of Directors to adopt and pursue legislative priorities that ensure fiscal sustainability and flexibility; work to restore diverted liquor revenue; retain existing state-shared city revenues; and preserve current local revenue authorities.

- Pursue funding for critical mandates like municipal stormwater as well as seek to ensure legislative and administrative restraint in adding new unfunded or underfunded mandates
- Continue to advocate for greater flexibility to respond to fiscal challenges, such as managing personnel costs through partnerships and collaborative efforts
- Conduct research on new opportunities and best practices for fiscal sustainability
- Communicate research results and best practices
- Educate members on the best practices, new models and strategies for long term fiscal sustainability.

## B. Promote economic development and community revitalization to maintain and enhance vibrant communities and "main streets". Cities need economic development and planning tools that assist in maintaining, expanding, and diversifying local economies.

AWC is passionate about and will accomplish this goal by:

- Advocating for economic development tools that include appropriate state infrastructure programs and flexible local funding options for all cities and towns
- Communicating and educating on the best practices that make a city a great place to live/work, conduct business and create jobs

- Educating cities on how to foster diverse economies by encouraging workforce development, technology and partnerships that help to retain and build businesses in our communities
- Research, communicate and educate on strategies that enhance technological infrastructure systems that reflect changing workplace and business environments

### Strategic components include:

- Pursuing authorization of tax increment financing and other tools that help foster job retention and creation

- Collaborating with the state and other partners in an effort to increase multi-modal transportation funding and expand sustainable revenue options for infrastructure
- Maintaining aggressive efforts to preserve funding for critical infrastructure programs like the Public Works Trust Fund, and to avoid diversion of capital investment dollars to the state general fund
- Conducting research and developing reports, tools, and educational programs regarding best practices, economic and workforce development and effective use of technology

**C. Facilitate civic engagement, youth outreach, leadership development and volunteerism.**

In order to fully understand the value of cities and towns, citizens need opportunities to become educated, empowered and inspired through positive interactions with their local governments.

AWC is passionate about and will accomplish this goal by:

- Continuing to establish the Center for Quality Communities in order to advance the AWC vision of developing a broad public understanding of the important roles of cities and towns

- Creating educational opportunities and tools for fostering community conversations about cities, the services provided and how they are financed
- Developing strategies and methods for reaching and engaging younger audiences
- Developing programs and tools to support cities in recruiting and managing community volunteers
- Developing strategies that encourage the development of future civic leaders, including minority populations

**Strategic components include:**

- Completing the business plan and other foundational work needed to position the Center for Quality Communities for growth and success
- Develop a local government civics course for use by cities
- Develop communications tools to help cities tell their stories more effectively
- Collaborate with existing youth organizations to form a cohesive network linking youth to civics education and government service

**D. Develop strategies for effective use of technology.**

Cities need innovative solutions to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by rapidly advancing technology to operate more efficiently, foster greater transparency and enhance accountability.

AWC is passionate about and will accomplish this goal by:

- Improving services to AWC members through enhanced technology, communication and member engagement tools
- Helping cities embrace 21st Century technology by discovering and building new ways to interact with and involve citizens
- Providing opportunities for city leaders to effectively navigate in a highly-technological environment
- Sharing communication

strategies to reach diverse communities

- Helping cities become more effective leaders in virtual citizen participation

**Strategic Components include:**

- Upgrade AWC's outdated technology platform in order to position AWC to more effectively serve its members
- Provide learning opportunities for city staff and elected officials in the use of modern technological and communications resources
- Conduct significant research, develop reports, tools and educational opportunities on what cities need to be more effective community leaders in a highly technological environment

**E. Establish and encourage efficiencies, partnerships and collaboration efforts.**

Faced with less revenue and staff, cities are re-examining priorities and evaluating services provided. As a result they must identify internal efficiencies, and develop new partnerships.

AWC is passionate about and will accomplish this goal by:

- Advocating the importance of cities to the state's economic health and the benefits of the state/city partnership
- Encouraging policies that ensure the authority of cities to contract or partner with public and private entities to provide needed services and programs
- Researching effective partnership models and share opportunities for cities and

towns to partner with each other and with other organizations in order to promote increased efficiencies and effectiveness of municipal services

- Building upon relationships with other associations and local organizations to address local government challenges and facilitate strong relationships at the state, regional, and community level
- Recognizing the changing workforce and research and provide information to assist members to manage demographic shifts and the evolving workforce

**Strategic components include:**

- Research and publish information on effective partnership models
- Develop educational opportunities for elected officials to learn more about succession planning, characteristics of generational differences, and leadership
- Continue to evaluate current and future partnerships, and avoid duplication of efforts and services