



# Strategic Priorities

Next Gen

Public Relations

Governance

Member Resources

Member Engagement

Culture

In early 2025, WCMA embarked on a crucial strategic planning initiative, a collaborative effort with the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (NIU CGS) which also serves as the WCMA Secretariat. This vital process, designed to guide the association for the next 3-5 years, began with a dedicated Board of Directors strategic planning session held prior to the Winter Conference, where six key Priority Areas were identified. Subsequently, the NIU CGS compiled a comprehensive list of Objectives, along with corresponding Key Actions and Tactics for each of these areas. To ensure the most effective allocation of resources, the Board's input was then sought to prioritize these actionable items, with the final Strategic Plan slated for review and formalization in Summer 2025.

By setting clear direction and priorities, this strategic plan will enable WCMA to effectively allocate resources, measure progress, and adapt to change over the next 3-5 years, maximizing its impact and value to members. This document is created to serve as a living and breathing representation of the progress made.

### **WCMA Mission Statement**

The Wisconsin / City County Management Association exists to promote professional public service excellence through ethical local government management.

### **WCMA Vision Statement**

WCMA represents professionalism, ethics, and excellence in local government management. WCMA is an action-focused, engaged-member organization that:

- Promotes professional, nonpartisan local government management;
- Provides quality programs, connections, and professional development offerings;
- Is a welcoming and inclusive organization; and
- Is an essential and innovative resource in public policy development and governance.

### **WCMA Core Behaviors**

- **Engage New Members:** Reach out to new members within 30 days.
- **Provide Timely Value:** Share relevant resources and opportunities regularly.
- **Act on Feedback:** Actively listen and respond to member input.
- **Foster Relationships:** Encourage and mentor members' leadership qualities.
- **Inspire New Talent:** Introduce the profession to students and non-traditional candidates.
- **Promote the Profession:** Actively advocate for our field's future.
- **Collaborative Spirit:** Embrace collaboration and partnerships within and outside of our association.
- **Uphold Professional Standards:** Follow, promote, and educate on the ICMA Code of Ethics.
- **Be Transparent:** Maintain good stewardship of association resources.

# 1

**Priority: Next Gen**

**Overall Strategic Focus:** To increase awareness of the profession in the next generation of leaders, build a robust talent pipeline, and strengthen relationships with educational institutions to ensure long-term membership growth and professional development.

*Talent Recruitment Committee*

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Key Actions or Tactics</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>
<b>1.1</b> Create / enhance a student outreach program (such as junior high, high school) to increase interest in the profession and recruit future local government managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a pipeline for mentorships/coaching.</li> </ul>	High	Talent Recruitment Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a dissemination strategy for sharing recruitment information with high school students.</li> </ul>	High		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an informational brochure for students.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in outreach events at local high schools.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in Career Fairs across the state.</li> </ul>	Low		
<b>1.2</b> Develop new and strengthen existing pipelines with higher education institutions in Wisconsin and neighboring states, including universities, colleges, and community colleges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for one-on-one mentorship for college and university students interested in the field.</li> </ul>	High	Talent Recruitment Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and maintain a contact form for interested students to be paired with job, internship, and/or mentorship opportunities.</li> </ul>	High		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore recruitment in degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels beyond the traditional core of public administration, political science, and public policy.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host regularly scheduled meetings with representatives from colleges and universities as least once per year.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan/strategize with ICMA student chapters.</li> </ul>	Low		

<b>1.3</b> Increase opportunities for internships and growth in the profession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize funding internships in the budget process.</li> </ul>	High	Talent Recruitment Committee; Executive Committee; Membership Services Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Endowment Fund to support internships.</li> </ul>	High		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow WCMA membership to include more students and non-manager professionals.</li> </ul>	Medium		

# 2

**Priority: Public Relations**

**Overall Strategic Focus:** To enhance the public perception of the council-manager form of government and the profession, strengthen communication channels, and revitalize the organization's image.

*Executive Board, Secretariat, & Senior Advisors*

Objective	Key Actions or Tactics	Priority	Responsible Party	Progress Update
<b>2.1</b> Revitalize the external image of the Association.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch a refreshed and simplified website incorporating modern design and improved user experience.</li> </ul>	High	Executive Board; Secretariat	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a comprehensive rebranding initiative.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate AI chatbox/search on WCMA website.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and distribute branded merchandise to increase visibility and promote organizational pride.</li> </ul>	Low		
<b>2.2</b> Enhance Association communications and promotion of the profession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a communications strategy to promote the profession and showcase work in Wisconsin communities.</li> </ul>	High	Executive Board; Secretariat; Senior Advisors; ICMA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactive promotion of council-manager form of government with presentations to more local councils and support targeted initiatives and campaigns, as necessary.</li> </ul>	Medium		
<b>2.3</b> Develop a more effective communication strategy that engages all members and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create an effective and comprehensive communications strategy including social media, topics, key messaging, target audiences, and platform strategies.</li> </ul>	High	Executive Board; Secretariat	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop news items for WCMA News that focus on stories of successful efforts in Wisconsin communities, especially on the economic benefits of pursuing diversity, equity, and inclusion.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define indicators of effectiveness that will allow WCMA to manage performance in its communication strategy (e.g. number of social media posts, engagement, etc.).</li> </ul>	Low		

# 3

**Priority: Governance**

**Overall Strategic Focus:** To streamline operations, ensure a smooth leadership transition, and strengthen organizational structure for long-term effectiveness.

*Executive Board*

Objective	Key Actions or Tactics	Priority	Responsible Party	Progress Update
<b>3.1</b> Ensure successful succession planning and transition to the next Executive Director.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview and identify candidate.</li> </ul>	High	Executive Board	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully complete Executive Director transition, ensuring continuity of operations and strategic direction.</li> </ul>	High		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement an orientation / onboarding plan for new Executive Director.</li> </ul>	Medium		
<b>3.2</b> Optimize organizational structure and efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make members more aware of association benefits and how to better engage and utilize.</li> </ul>	High	Executive Board; Membership Services Committee; Committee Chairs	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review WCMA’s rates and fees and explore restructure to ensure long-term financial sustainability.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce functions and focus on doing core objectives exceptionally well.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review conference committee structure to potentially integrate Regional Directors to enhance regional input and participation in conference planning.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post key governing documents on WCMA website (e.g. annual budget, board meeting packets, meeting minutes, etc.).</li> </ul>	Low		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and explore updating WCMA’s Financial Policies.</li> </ul>	Low		
<b>3.3</b> Communicate with other committees to complement existing efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider consolidating or eliminating underperforming or duplicative committees.</li> </ul>	High	Secretariat; Committee Chairs	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance committee accountability by implementing yearly action plans or goal setting and standardized board reporting protocols.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue committee chair meetings to enhance and encourage collaboration and communication.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication between DEIB and Talent Recruitment Committees about engaging diverse populations in recruitment efforts.</li> </ul>	Low		

# 4

**Priority: Member Resources**

**Overall Strategic Focus:** To provide members with practical skills, valuable resources and tangible toolkits, and support networks to thrive in their careers and address current challenges.

*Professional Development Committee, Senior Advisors, & Membership Services Committee*

Objective	Key Actions or Tactics	Priority	Responsible Party	Progress Update
<b>4.1</b> Enhance professional development and skills training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement quarterly professional development webinars.</li> </ul>	Medium	Professional Development Committee; Senior Advisors	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver training sessions on how to effectively utilize available organizational resources (online repositories, salary surveys, etc.).</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create more interactive sessions with Senior Advisors.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with external organizations to broaden professional development opportunities and expose members to a wider range of expertise (e.g. WCA, WGFOA, LWM, etc.).</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide "Back to Basics" ethics training opportunity.</li> </ul>	Medium		
<b>4.2</b> Strengthen online member support and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a comprehensive online repository of educational resources, including, but not limited to: legal, financial, mental health, and HR guidance.</li> </ul>	Medium	Committee Chairs; Membership Services Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restructure salary survey to be shorter and easier to complete; explore the potential to include department head positions.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase participation and engagement within the organization's ListServ.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and promote resources and support for contract negotiations and career assistance for administrators and managers.</li> </ul>	Low		

# 5

## Priority: Member Engagement

**Overall Strategic Focus:** To create a vibrant, welcoming, and valuable membership experience through engaging conferences, strong networking opportunities, and proactive member support.

*Conference Planning Committee & Membership Services Committee*

Objective	Key Actions or Tactics	Priority	Responsible Party	Progress Update
<b>5.1</b> Enhance conference experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create “must-go” topics and a "wow" factor into bi-annual conferences.</li> </ul>	High	Conference Planning Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore creative solutions or sponsorships to increase conference engagement.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revamp conference programming to prioritize hands-on technical skills, development workshops and interactive sessions.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore reimagined conference formats such as a full winter conference and a focused summer conference featuring municipal tours, orientations, and success stories.</li> </ul>	Low		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of scholarships awarded for ICMA conferences.</li> </ul>	Low		
<b>5.2</b> Strengthen membership engagement and networking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase direct recruitment of members to participate on committees.</li> </ul>	High	Membership Services Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain status as the “go-to” network for administrators in Wisconsin.</li> </ul>	High		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve integration of new members by continuing and marketing the conference buddy program.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster increased interaction between new and experienced administrators through mentorship programs, networking events, and developing a formal new member orientation.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement new strategies and creative ways to better engage the "silent majority" of the membership.</li> </ul>	Medium		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase internal recognition of member successes through a dedicated program or platform.</li> </ul>	Low		
<b>5.3</b> Develop new and strengthen existing pipelines into the profession with professionals in other lines of work and their professional associations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the exposure of local government management as a career path at conferences, forums, and other events of professional associations beyond WCMA, such as those for planners, engineers, and government finance officers.</li> </ul>	High	Talent Recruitment Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase collaboration with other professional organizations including addressing hiring and recruitment challenges.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust the promotion and registration strategy for conferences to encourage attendance by non-WCMA members with a public service orientation.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boost recruitment efforts from different professions and the private sector.</li> </ul>	Medium		
<b>5.4</b> Deliver a more valuable and impactful membership experience that leads to increased member retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the Code of Ethics.</li> </ul>	High	Membership Services Committee; Executive Board; Ethics Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of corporate sponsors to allow for expanded programs and services.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen team building within the organization.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore additional unique incentives for active WCMA members.</li> </ul>	Medium		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a quarterly “Member Spotlight” column to highlight careers, personality of member, staff, etc.</li> </ul>	Low		

# 6

**Priority: Culture**

**Overall Strategic Focus:** To cultivate a welcoming, supportive, accessible, and collaborative organization and profession, while adapting to current political sensitivities and remaining apolitical.

*Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging Committee*

Objective	Key Actions or Tactics	Priority	Responsible Party	Progress Update
<b>6.1</b> Advance inclusion and diversification through engagement and communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a communication and integration strategy that promotes inclusivity and belonging, emphasizing respectful dialogue and understanding, while adapting to address political sensitivities.</li> </ul>	Medium	DEIB Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement “difficult conversations” training.</li> </ul>	Medium		
<b>6.2</b> Increase diversity in membership and the profession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and launch a targeted marketing and recruitment strategy to attract diverse candidates to the organization and the profession.</li> </ul>	Medium	DEIB Committee	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize the recruitment and advancement of diverse managers and administrators through targeted outreach and professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>	Low		