

Moving Toward Sustainability: Effective and Sustainable Practices for Creating Your Water Utility Roadmap



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, April, 2014

Sustainable water infrastructure is critical to provide the American public with clean and safe water and helping ensure the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of the communities utilities serve. Utilities across the country face tremendous challenges including aging infrastructure, increasing customer expectations, and rising operating costs. In the face of these challenges, utility leaders are looking for practical, flexible and user-friendly tools to assist them in ensuring their operations are sustainable over the long-term.



"This document provides utility leaders with cohesive structure to address various challenges proactively and with confidence to ensure the sustainability of their operations and the communities they serve"—Nancy Stoner, Acting Assistant Administrator for Water

EPA is now issuing *Moving Toward Sustainability: Sustainable and Effective Practices for Creating Your Own Water Utility Roadmap*. The purposes of this document is to assist utilities move toward sustainability by implementing proven practices over time at a pace consistent with their needs and the needs of the communities they serve.

What's In It For Me: Why Utility Leaders Should Use This Document

- Save money by optimizing the planning and delivery of services
- Ensure water availability consistent with customer needs
- Employ energy and water efficient practices and technologies
- Become more resilient to short-term disasters and long-term climate related challenges
- Build greater support from customers and other community stakeholders

"As more utilities begin the process of transforming their services in order to become a truly sustainable water resource utility, this document can help them begin that journey with confidence."

- Diane Taniguchi-Dennis,
Clean Water Services,
Hillsboro, Oregon

"For smaller and medium sized utilities like ours, the roadmap provides a flexible, practical and easily understandable way to ensure your utility is implementing the right practices for the right challenge at the right time."

- George Martin,
Greenwood Metropolitan
District, Greenwood,
South Carolina

"This document reflects strong and continuing support by EPA and the utility community to promote effective and sustainable management. It will help utilities across the country become more sustainable and better meet the needs of their communities"

- Tom Sigmund, NEW Water, Green Bay, Wisconsin

"Smaller utilities face an array of daunting challenges. This document includes practices that can help these systems provide clean and safe water to their communities in a manner that meets the nation's need for sustainable water resources"

- Lisa Daniels,
Pennsylvania Department
of Environmental Protec-

Business Levels

Level 1-Providing Fundamental Services:

At this level, a utility is implementing practices that focus on meeting and maintaining compliance, ensuring adequate levels of operational resiliency, and implementing revenue and financing mechanisms that ensure financial viability.

Level 2-Optimizing Operations and Services:

In addition to providing basic services consistent with Level 1, the utility is focusing on continual improvement and views optimizing its operations as central to mission success. The utility has adopted sustainability as a core operating goal and appropriately utilizes green infrastructure

Level 3-Transforming Operations and Services for the Future:

At this level, a utility is implementing practices that focus on meeting and maintaining compliance, ensuring adequate levels of operational resiliency, and implementing revenue and financing mechanisms that ensure financial viability.

How the Document is Organized:

Example practices are organized under ten core management areas that correspond to EPA's *Attributes of Effectively Managed Utilities*.

- Utility Business Planning
- Product Quality and Operational Optimization
- Customer Satisfaction and Stakeholder Understanding and Support
- Employee Leadership and Development
- Financial Viability
- Infrastructure Stability
- Operational Resiliency
- Community Sustainability
- Water Resource Adequacy
- Performance Measurement and Continual Improvement

Practices within each core management area are presented across three business levels displayed at left. Business levels are intended to give utility managers a sense of where to begin their efforts.

Things to Know:

- This document does not define one roadmap for utilities to follow. It provides the utility with the flexibility needed to meet their specific needs.
- The document reflects extensive input from federal, state and community stakeholders, and contains practical examples utilities can use to determine what level of sustainability they are currently operating at. Future goals can be established accordingly.
- Every utility's circumstances are unique. Example practices can be scaled to meet the appropriate level of technical, financial and managerial capacity.

Getting Started — How Utilities Can Use This Document:

Utilities are encouraged to take the following steps to most effectively employ new sustainability practices:

- Assess strengths and weaknesses in each of the core management areas. Prioritize management areas that should be addressed up front.
- Determine what sustainability practices are already employed by the utility. What business level is the utility currently operating at?
- Utilizing the example practices presented in the document, the utility should develop its own "roadmap" to adopt practices consistent with its overall goals and the needs of its customers and community.
- Develop an implementation plan that identifies specific action items, who is responsible, and a timeline for completion.