



Michigan
Municipal
Executives

A State Affiliate of ICMA

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2028

**Michigan Municipal Executives
Strategic Plan - Adopted November 2025**

INTRODUCTION

This **Michigan Municipal Executives (MME) Strategic Plan 2025-2026** outlines our vision, priorities, and roadmap for achieving sustainable growth and long-term impact over the next 18–24 months. Developed through membership input and a reflection on both challenges and opportunities as well as the state of the profession and insights from the May 2025 Board Retreat—this plan serves as a guide for aligning our goals with specific actions. It also identifies key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing MME and the profession, many of which are woven into the strategic goals and actions.

Mission: MME works to provide members’ professional development, support their personal growth, and promote the municipal executive profession in Michigan. In service to its members and their communities, MME seeks to enhance management excellence, continuous improvement, and high ethical standards.

Purpose Statement: The purpose of MME is to foster and encourage the personal and professional development of its members so they may better serve their communities and to promote, encourage, and preserve high ethical standards for municipal executives.

Values:

- 1. Belonging and Mutual Respect** - Cultivate an environment where all individuals feel seen, heard, and valued, recognizing the richness that diversity brings to our collective work.
- 2. Community-Centered Service** – Prioritize the well-being of the communities we serve, ensuring our actions and initiatives address their unique needs and contribute to meaningful, lasting impact.
- 3. Learning and Growth** – Commit to continuous professional and personal development, fostering opportunities that empower members at every stage of their journey.
- 4. Excellence in Leadership and Management** – Foster the highest standards in municipal governance through innovation and integrity.
- 5. Ethical Stewardship** – Lead with transparency, accountability, and a strong sense of public duty, serving as trusted stewards of the public interest.

ORGANIZATIONAL SWOT

Through the strategic planning process, it became clear that the organization would benefit significantly from more standardized processes and protocols, particularly to support smoother leadership transitions and build long-term capacity. As a volunteer-led organization, the lack of consistent structures has often led to inefficiencies, repetitive dialogue and knowledge gaps during leadership changes.

At the same time, the organization's volunteer-driven nature was identified as a core strength—demonstrating deep community commitment and flexibility—but one that requires clearer systems to harness that energy effectively. Standardization will not only ease transitions but also provide a stronger framework for growth, sustainability, and shared accountability.

STRENGTHS

Several key strengths emerged that reflect the core of the organization's impact and identity. Foremost among these is the strength of the organization's membership offerings, particularly its high-quality professional development opportunities. Members consistently highlighted the value of the **Summer Workshop and Winter Institute** emphasizing their strong participation rates, networking opportunities and learning. These offerings are viewed not just as events, but as essential tools for career growth, skill-building, and ongoing learning and importantly peer to peer relationships.

Equally central is the organization's **network and connection**, which stood out as a priority strength. Members described the organization as a place where mentorship is accessible, peer support is dependable, and relationships with regional groups and other professional organizations provide added value. The strong network fosters a sense of community and connectivity, making members feel part of something larger than themselves.

Perhaps the most consistently echoed strength, however, is the people—the leaders and members who make up the organization. Feedback revealed a deep appreciation for the commitment, experience, and professionalism of the membership. Members described each other as caring, generous with knowledge, and passionate about the field of local government management. The executive leadership, peer-driven support, and genuine camaraderie were cited as defining traits of the organization's culture. This strong foundation of dedicated individuals not only enhances the organization's current effectiveness but also ensures it remains open to new ideas, financially sound, and well-positioned to welcome new energy and leadership into the field.

WEAKNESSES

Feedback gathered during the strategic planning process also illuminated several key challenges the organization faces, which provide important direction for improvement, and potential goals and action steps. One priority weakness is **member participation**. Many respondents noted a lack of consistent engagement and outreach across the membership, particularly from certain geographic areas like the Upper Peninsula. A common concern was that too few individuals are doing too much of the work, resulting in limited bandwidth, capacity and engagement. This imbalance in participation was described as barriers to organizational growth and sustainability and a strain on volunteer leadership.

Closely tied to participation are membership-related weaknesses, particularly regarding **onboarding and integrating new members**. New managers joining the profession are not met with a structured outreach or onboarding system in place to help them connect with the organization. Feedback also pointed to challenges in **bridging the gap between longtime members and newer professionals**, with some describing the culture as unintentionally exclusive, dominated by established regional centers, and noting age gaps in membership. These dynamics can create unwelcoming experiences for those not already established with the organization, limiting the organization's ability to grow and diversify its base to newcomers and those interested in joining in the future.

Another significant area of concern is the **changing landscape of the local government** profession. As many experienced managers approach retirement, the organization risks losing institutional knowledge without intentional strategies for succession planning and continuity. Additionally, newer professionals may be less interested in traditional leadership paths, creating uncertainty around future engagement for the organization or externally how the field of public administration evolved. Cultural challenges of the organization were also identified, including egos, personal agenda, cliques, and a lack of inclusive language, which together limit the sense of belonging for some members. **Cultural challenges** provide opportunities for change that can impact the organization's future and should not be seen as a barrier to future growth.

Beyond these, several structural and operational issues were raised. The organization's **fiscal conservatism, lack of 501(c)(3) status**, and concerns about how dues are spent suggest a need for more transparent and strategic **financial planning**. Communication struggles, such as weak enforcement of listserv protocols and difficulty reaching members effectively, were also cited. Capacity remains an overarching weakness, as members—balancing demanding jobs—often lack the time or ability to contribute to organizational work, exacerbating the reliance on a small group of dedicated volunteers in the absence of full time staff.

Finally, the geographic spread of members, combined with limited in-person interaction and occasional negativity within discussions, has made it harder to build cohesion across the organization. While these weaknesses present real challenges, they also highlight opportunities to strengthen communication infrastructure, culture, and member support going forward.

OPPORTUNITIES

The strategic planning process revealed a wide range of opportunities that the organization can leverage to strengthen its impact, expand its reach, and better support its members. One of the priority opportunities lies in **enhancing organizational** benefits. Members expressed enthusiasm for expanding training and education, including one-day vendor-sponsored sessions, regional learning opportunities, and a more intentional mentorship or ambassador program to connect new members with experienced professionals. There is also strong interest in resource sharing and building capacity by tapping into the existing wealth of knowledge within the membership. These efforts could not only improve professional development but also foster a deeper sense of connection and shared purpose.

A second major opportunity centers on **engagement and visibility**. There is clear potential for the organization to become a stronger voice for the local government management profession, particularly through K–12 outreach, raising public awareness, and connecting with high school students to spark early interest in public service careers. Members emphasized the importance of better utilizing tools like the website to enhance communication and showcase the value of the profession. Additionally, the feedback suggests that many members are willing to contribute if asked directly, such as serving on a committee, engaging with the annual awards program and participating in annual events, highlighting the need for more proactive, personalized outreach.

Membership growth and inclusion also emerged as a priority area for opportunity. Expanding membership categories, engaging younger professionals, and reaching out to department heads and other local and county government roles were identified as strategic moves to strengthen and diversify the member base. There is particular momentum behind increasing gender and racial diversity, creating welcome committees, and **offering a more structured support** network for new managers. With an influx of new managers across the state, the organization has a unique window to provide the support and training they need to succeed.

Other promising opportunities include strengthening the organization's financial base through expanded sponsorships and fundraising, and embracing technology to improve engagement—such as starting a podcast, offering training on emerging technology tools, and expanding virtual communication methods. Internally, there's interest in building leadership capacity (“the bench”), providing mental health and

wellness support, and potentially **hiring full-time staff** to support the work currently shouldered by volunteers. Finally, greater regional coordination, such as consistent conference locations, could streamline planning and build stronger localized networks.

THREATS

The strategic planning process also surfaced several key threats facing MME that could impact its future stability, relevance, and effectiveness. One of the most pressing priority threats is the **shifting nature of the local government** profession itself. Members expressed concern about a decline in early career opportunities, such as internships and entry-level positions, which are essential for developing future leaders. There is also a noticeable drop in the number of people entering public service, driven in part by negative perceptions of the field, bad early-career experiences, burnout and a lack of public appreciation for the profession. As a result, many are choosing other career paths, leaving a talent pipeline that is both shrinking and aging.

In addition to workforce concerns, there is a growing threat around awareness and **public perception of both the profession and MME** as an organization. The public's understanding and respect for local government continues to erode, as partisan politics, citizen journalism, and general distrust in public institutions create a challenging environment for public managers. MME itself is challenged with low visibility, with some members and non-members unclear about its purpose or benefits. Furthermore, there is a perception that the organization may be too city-focused, potentially alienating those in counties or townships but with opportunity to invest in these areas.

The political climate also emerged as a significant external threat. As national politics increasingly influence local governance, members are feeling the impact of political polarization, diminished autonomy, financial cuts and declining civic virtue. These forces make the work of professional managers more contentious and less secure, further discouraging people from entering or remaining in the field.

Financial uncertainty poses another risk. Members pointed to the possibility that shortfalls in conference funding could impact member benefits, potential reductions in state or federal support, and financial constraints among members that could limit participation. These issues could threaten the organization's ability to offer quality programming and maintain engagement. Internally, declining membership participation, especially among newer professionals, and the lack of diversity continue to pose existential risks. Without stronger succession planning, the organization may struggle to stay relevant to a new generation of leaders with different needs and expectations.

Finally, **organizational culture threats** were noted, including personal agendas, conflict in areas like the listserv, which can create internal rifts and discourage open dialogue..

These threats reflect both the changing external environment and internal considerations that MME must navigate with clarity and innovation to remain a strong and effective professional association.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

A membership survey was developed in collaboration with MME committees in response to a shared consensus and expressed interest in gathering input from the MME membership. The results of the membership survey were integrated into the goals and actions in this strategic plan. The membership survey summary can be found here ([LINK](#)).

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

MME strategic goals and action steps were identified through this planning process and are organized by committee to align with the structure of MME's ongoing work. These goals were intentionally prioritized to ensure focus, feasibility, and meaningful progress, especially in light of concerns raised about the need for more consistent and robust committee participation. The planning process recognized the reality that our members are balancing significant responsibilities in their regular professional roles, and as such, this plan aims to be both ambitious and realistic. By organizing the work in this way, we seek to empower committees with clear direction while respecting members' time and leveraging the strengths of our volunteer-member driven model.

ORGANIZATIONAL

Several goals and action items fell outside of the scope of committee responsibilities. These items holistically will support organizational capacity, membership recruitment and sustainability of ongoing operations of the organization.

- A. Goal: Advance decision making on the new chosen Listserv platform with dedicated community guidelines.
- B. Goal: Execute a communication strategy that incorporates key engagement points, and items of interest including professional development opportunities (conferences and training), milestones, financial assistance, and more providing advance notice for members to consider and plan accordingly. Communication strategy should include website updates, newsletter frequency, communication to members, LinkedIn, Listserv, and regional groups.

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- C. Goal: Develop a Fund Development Strategy to guide financial diversification and on-going stability of organizational operations.
- D. Goal: Advance and sustain MME merchandise
- E. Goal: Set routine reviews of website platforms and functions to ensure they meet the needs of MME.
- F. Goal: Develop and or update a membership brochure highlighting all benefits of MME membership and update annually. Brochure to be used for membership recruitment and provided to existing members.
- G. Goal: Establish a structured approach with the various regional groups to enhance communication, position MME as a trusted and respected resource, and support efforts in membership recruitment and retention. This may involve appointing an MME Liaison for each regional group to ensure consistent and effective communication between the regional groups and the MME Board and Committees.
- H. Goal: Conduct an annual short-form survey during the membership renewal process each November.
- I. Goal: Implement standardized feedback forms across the Winter Institute, Summer Workshop, and professional development trainings to ensure consistent data collection on membership satisfaction.
- J. Goal: Conduct an annual membership survey
 - a. Action: Shorten the survey, allow progress saving, and maintain consistent annual timing.
 - b. Action: Administer the survey during membership renewal or event registration and collect input at major events like the Winter Institute and Summer Workshop.
 - c. Broaden communication through newsletters, personalized invitations, and committee engagement.
- K. Develop and maintain MME Committee Protocols and Procedures
- L. Develop and maintain Leadership Transition Checklist
- M. Explore, execute and maintain a storage option for MME archives including meeting notes, documents, and resources

MEMBERSHIP

The topic of membership garnered a lot of attention in the membership survey, on the committee level as well as during the strategic plan retreat. A heavy emphasis on communication with members, member retention and growth, as well as engagement of members remained consistent throughout the planning process. An emphasis on membership is a key priority for MME.

- A. Goal: Develop a Member Engagement Strategy
 - a. Action: Engage committee leadership to support membership retention, cultivation, and satisfaction

- b. Action: Identify member recruitment targets (stage in career, types of membership, women in the profession, age range, region recruitment etc.)
- c. Action: Analysis on current membership data would be beneficial specifically to understanding correlation between longevity of membership, type of government, and role.
- d. Action: Opportunities to recruit in county, township, and village identifying forms of government should be explored.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Committee Mission

The purpose of the **Professional Development Committee** is to provide opportunities to learn the latest techniques, trends, and best practices of municipal management through a variety of mechanisms including face-to-face interactions and peer-to-peer networking, classes and seminars in person and via the web, and publications both electronic and printed.

Goal 1: Host Two High-Quality In-Person Conferences Annually

Action Steps:

- A. Develop a conference planning timeline in collaboration with MML, and Nonprofits Spot including theme selection, speaker outreach, venue booking, and marketing strategy (Resource: MML, Nonprofit Spot staff, MME Committees, Fundraising)
- B. All MME Committees are required to have subcommittees for annual conferences, producing conference sessions on relevant topics for PDC consideration. (Resource: MME Committees)
- C. Identify current topics, potential speakers and delivery methods. (Resource: MML, Nonprofit Spot staff, MME Committees, Fundraising)
- D. Develop a photo shot list for each conference to support new marketing and brand recognition of MME (Resource: MML for photography)
- E. Identify key opportunities for member and attendee input at both the Winter Institute and Summer Workshop.

Goal 2: Offer Two Professional Trainings Annually

Action Steps:

- A. Identify training topics based on member surveys (Resource: Annual Membership Survey, MME Committees)
- B. Provide continuing education credits (CEUs) or certificates where applicable.
- C. Evaluate training effectiveness using post-training survey

- D. Identify current topics, potential speakers and delivery method

Goal 3: Expand Access Through One-Day Offerings at Various Regional Locations or virtual

Action Steps:

- A. Schedule at least two one-day satellite events annually in geographically diverse areas to increase accessibility. (Resource: Regional Groups, Volunteer Members, and Fundraising)
- B. Integrate training offerings into the fund development model, offering sponsorship opportunities. (Resource: Nonprofits Spot, Executive Team, Fund Development Committee)
- C. Identify current topics, potential speakers and delivery method

Goal 4: Strengthen Committee Engagement and Sustainability

Action Steps:

- A. Implement a 2-year commitment policy for Professional Development Committee (PDC) members, aiming to retain at least 50% of members year over year. (Resource: MME Committee Procedures)
- B. Establish clear committee application processes, including expectations and required qualifications. (Resource: MME Committee Procedures)
- C. Engage Board to support active participation from membership (Resource: MME Committee Procedures)
- D. Support in collaboration with Nonprofit Spot staff, the creation of an informational one sheet document that describes the Professional Development Committee charge and provided essential information for members who may want to become engaged (Resource: Nonprofit Spot staff)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OTHER:

- A. Colloquium Speaker for MML

EARLY CAREER OUTREACH

Early Career Committee Mission

The purpose of the Early Career Outreach Committee is to increase awareness of the profession at all levels of local government and help early career professionals thrive.

Goal 1: Increased awareness of public administration as a profession

Action Steps:

- A. Collaboration with high school students through Junior Achievement, Michigan Chamber and other local youth engagement events to increase awareness of public administration (Resource: Committee Members)

- B. Collaboration with college students who are exploring various degree options and/or public service careers to increase awareness of public administration (Resource: Committee Members)

Goal 2: New Member Mentor / Mentee Program

Action Steps:

- A. Board Approval of Committee recommendation of formal mentoring program(Resource: MME Members)
- B. Work with MML Staff to establish Mentor Program similar to 1650 Ambassador (Resource: MME Members, MML Staff and Potentially Funding)

Goal 3: Training Opportunities for New Managers

Action Step:

- A. Focus on training/educational sessions in the spring and fall and continue coffee/dinner gatherings at the two annual conferences

Goal 4: Subcommittee for Professional Development Conference Session

Development

- A. All MME Committees must establish ad-hoc (?) subcommittees for annual conferences to develop session proposals on relevant topics for PDC review, adhering to established timelines.

DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee Mission

The **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee** is committed to fostering a culture where every member of MME and each unique community is respected, valued, and served equitably. Grounded in our shared responsibility as public servants, we recognize the unique needs of each community we serve and we will support our members by advancing inclusive practices, promoting equitable access to services, and empowering diverse voices across all levels of our work while navigating emerging challenges and opportunities in government.

Goal 1: Develop and Deliver Practical Educational Resources

Action Steps:

- A. Partner with subject matter experts to design **conference breakout sessions** tailored to real-world organizational and community based culture opportunities and challenges in local government.
- B. Create a **resource library** that may consist of best practices, case studies, and articles focused on organizational and community culture topics such as inclusive community engagement, facilitation resources, policy audits, and equitable service access. Share the resource library with MME Board, membership and committees.
- C. Curate a **partner list of organizations and community leaders** members can turn to when navigating organizational and community culture related issues.
- D. Author **newsletter articles** offering organizational and community culture resources, articles, and government best practices.
- E. Evaluate and **share emerging state or federal government actions** that may impose challenges or opportunities to local/county government leadership. When applicable, share approaches to manage risk.

Goal 2: Foster Safe and Respectful Peer Dialogue

Action Steps:

- A. Create an **“Insight Forum”** (anonymized or opt-in), where members can submit questions or scenarios and receive peer responses grounded in experience rooted in culture, belonging and diversity, equity and inclusion. Create an environment where members can share challenges, ask difficult questions, and grow professionally.
- B. Honor an **open door policy for other MME committees and members** to join the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee meetings to support inclusion.
- C. Help members **anticipate and respond to social, political, or community events** that may require a culture and DEI-informed leadership approach.

Goals 3: Support an inclusive culture within MME

Action Steps:

- A. **Work in collaboration with the Member Support and Early Career Outreach Committees** to identify ways to reach and retain new members from diverse backgrounds via university communication and presentations.
- B. Foster a sense of belonging, support, and empowerment by **creating identity-based affinity groups** that may identify under areas of state and federal law (Example, Age, race/ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA+, disability, etc.) that provide safe spaces for connection, dialogue, and advocacy.
- C. Explore creating a program similar to the [16/50 Project](#) as a model to increase other types of diversity in professional local government management.

ETHICS

Ethics Committee Mission

The purpose of the **Ethics Committee** is to promote, encourage, and preserve high ethical standards for municipal executives by serving as the state review agency for ICMA to address charges against members regarding breach of the ethical code and working with the Professional Development Committee to strengthen the members' knowledge of acceptable conduct under MME's code of ethics.

Goal 1: In partnership with other MME Committees provide educational opportunities related to ethics to the MME Membership

Action Steps:

- A. Educate membership on ethics related topics in newsletters, at conferences, and via regional groups (Resource: regional groups)

Goal 2: Create and provide awareness to membership on the role of Ethics in the profession

Action Steps:

- A. In partnership with MME Committee and Board host a new member orientation and connection with a mentor
- B. Share a new member packet inclusive of information on Ethics
- C. Engage speakers to meet and share at regional group meetings

Goal 3: Create a culture where ethics dialogue encourages asking questions, seeking guidance and learning from other examples while maintaining integrity in the profession (a team sport not a gotcha)

Action Steps:

- A. Meet Charter Requirements on-going

Goal 4: Provide safe and confidential space for members to ask questions and receive resources

Action Steps:

- A. Provide confidential ethics coaching on demand or at annual conferences similar to executive coaching approach

MEMBER SUPPORT

Member Support Committee Mission

The purpose of the Member Support Committee is to support members by connecting them to resources for mentoring, coaching, and counseling.

Goal 1: Make members aware of services and programs available and how to access them

Action Steps:

- A. Define list of services that MME provides and educate membership on how to initiate, create a one-sheeter

Goal 2: Develop diverse group of coaches and mentors

Goal 3: Identify early indicators of managers under distress

Goal 4: Establish trust with MME membership that fosters the sense that the committee can help during difficult personal and professional challenges.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy Committee Mission

The purpose of the Advocacy Committee is to raise awareness of the council-manager form of governance.

Goal 1: Advocate the profession through outreach to the general public with the goal of providing awareness of the field and its role.

Action Steps:

- A. Maintain and develop educational resources on the MME website which can be used for advocacy events.
- B. Work with the Early Career Outreach committee to conduct outreach to K-12 students.

Goal 2: Advocate for the profession through outreach to elected officials through the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Township Services, and Michigan Association of Counties with the goal of establishing and prioritizing effective council-manager relationships.

- A. Identify case studies that show the value of council-manager governance and utilize these for "calls for presentations" for conferences.
- B. Develop educational resources that specifically speak to the relationship between elected officials and local government managers.

Goal 3: Advocate for the profession through outreach to civil servants with the goal of improving communications between employees and managers and encouraging the exchange of ideas.

- A. Work with partner organizations to ensure the perspective of municipal executives are heard.

- B. Develop presentations about building an effective manager-staff relationship, to be shared with conferences.
- C. Update and maintain a list of professional organizations and contacts, and publish and send to other groups for effective coordination.
- D. Establish a "President's Roundtable", an opportunity for Presidents of Michigan-based local government professional organizations to hold an annual meeting to discuss projects which impact all of our organizations.

Goal 4: Advocate for the profession through encouraging outreach by individual members with the goal of providing awareness of the positive impact of executive roles in communities.

- A. Make information available promoting the effectiveness of council-manager form of governance at the local level - "success stories" which can be used for advocacy/provide insight into why this form of governance works.
- B. Conduct media outreach on the success stories.

Goal 5: In partnership with the Professional Development Committee, establish key note or paid speakers for annual MME conferences.

EXPERIENCE

Experience Committee Mission

The purpose of the Experience Committee is to provide professional growth and recognition.

Goal 1: Celebrate the success of MME Members through annual awards program

Action Steps:

- A. Follow the annual schedule for awards timeline, including notices and deadlines. (Resource: Nonprofit Spot staff)
- B. Lead and support email reminders, newsletter articles, and address application questions. (Resource: Nonprofit Spot staff)
- C. Annually review award categories and evaluate opportunities.

Goal 2: Foster career development opportunities for MME members through annual scholarship program

Action Steps:

- A. Develop an annual scholarship program and processes including a schedule, notices and deadlines. (Resource: Nonprofit Spot staff)
- B. Lead and support email reminders, newsletter articles, and address application questions. (Resource: Nonprofit Spot staff)

- C. Explore scholarship fund opportunities via a foundation or 501c3 model

Goal 3: Continually update and expand the history of the organization

Action Steps:

- A. Establish goals for interviews and member profiles
- B. Update history annually to ensure strong record
- C. Explore and establish way to share experience and expertise of MME members outside of conference convenings

Goal 4: Find opportunities to share member experiences and expertise to the benefit of membership and the professional overall.

Action Steps:

- A. Identify and explore how photography at events can support sharing experiences and expertise; consider a shot list
- B. Identify people to interview and consider where interviews can be hosted
- C. Explore webspace applications to share member experiences and expertise
- D. Explore resources needed to launch a podcast focused on sharing experiences and expertise