



2023 Fall Strategic Leadership & Board of Directors Meeting

November 6 – 7 | The Renaissance Asheville | Asheville, NC

Δ Board of Directors Committees/Meetings

All Meetings are on the lobby level, unless otherwise noted.

Monday, November 6, 2023

Morning

8:00 – 10:00 Awards Committee Δ

Paparazzi, 12th Floor

10:00 – 11:45 Executive Committee Δ

Oakland Heights Room, 12th Floor

Afternoon

12:00 – 1:00 Fall Strategic Leadership Meeting Networking Lunch

Windsor Ballroom

1:00 – 5:00 Fall Strategic Leadership Meeting

Windsor Ballroom

1:00-2:15 Water Sector Mega-Trends ... How to Tell a Proactive Leadership Story?

Clean water agency leaders are facing more complex challenges (and, of course more opportunities) than at any time in the past. The list of issues is long, but are these current themes the 'mega-trends' that will shape the future of the sector? This discussion will provide a reality check for NACWA – to hear directly from you – to help focus on prioritizing messaging, converting the most critical priorities into actionable policy positions, and determining how best to tell your story.

Discussion Prompts –

Themes that have risen to the top of NACWA's priority list are:

- 1) Workforce - hiring, retention, retirements, and DE&I;
- 2) PFAS and emerging contaminants;
- 3) Climate, resiliency;
- 4) Security/cybersecurity;
- 5) Supply chain, inflation and project delivery;
- 6) Technology, digital and artificial intelligence;
- 7) Privatization, consolidation, regionalization;
- 8) Funding, financing and low-income ratepayers; and
- 9) The ratepayer trust gap.

- Are these the issues or mega-trends utility leaders stay up at night worrying about or believe will shape the future of the sector?

- From your utility or corporate perspective, what do you think is the overriding concern/opportunity for the water sector?
- With each of these issues potentially being the top priority for a particular utility at any time, and with insufficient bandwidth to address them all at once, how do we stay focused and not jump back and forth between mega-trends?
- How can NACWA message this and convert it into actionable policy positions and/or a positive story to tell key audiences about the work being done in the water sector?

2:15-3:15 **Viewing the Water Workforce Challenge as a Bellwether for Success**

There has been a lot of discussion about the water sector's difficulty attracting workers and retaining those workers who join the water workforce. This frustrates utility leaders in the sector because the assumption is the water sector is a great place to work. This discussion will focus on solutions, but also identify the top issues and what NACWA's role looks like in the years ahead.

Discussion Prompts –

- What makes the water sector a special or unique place to work?
- How do we create material that expresses the value of a career in water and who is the audience for this?
- Alternatively, is hiring more workers for the sector the top priority? What is the role for technology, Artificial Intelligence, or other alternatives to workforce shortfalls that may persist?
- What is NACWA's appropriate role on this issue?

3:15-3:45 **Break**

3:45 – 4:45 **Regional Issues Discussion**

NACWA is pleased to have several member utility leaders from EPA Region 4 (which is comprised of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and 6 Tribes) to provide an overview of their unique issues but also how they see themselves fitting into some of the broadest national challenges and mega-trends identified in the earlier discussion.

Evening

5:30 – 7:00 Leadership Social Event

Top of the Plaza, 12th Floor

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Morning

8:00 – 9:00 Audit Committee Meeting Δ

Oakland Heights Room, 12th Floor

8:00 – 9:00 Fall Strategic Leadership Meeting Networking Breakfast

Windsor Ballroom

9:00 – 11:30 Fall Strategic Leadership Meeting

Windsor Ballroom

9:00 – 10:00 Federal Funding and Telling the Story of Community and Environmental Progress

NACWA has worked for decades making the case for increased federal funding for the water sector. And over the past few years we have been incredibly successful, first with pandemic spending, then wastewater surveillance funding, the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program Funding, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law boosting the SRF and grant funding, the Inflation Reduction Act, earmarks, an expanded WIFIA program and other funding programs. But how is this money being spent and how do we gather the stories that highlight how the sector is putting this array of funding to work in our communities? Who must we tell this story to? There are already strong signals of potentially lower federal funding levels in the future and our inability to tell the funding return on investment story effectively could mean the decades of work to get to this point will have been squandered. How do we avoid this outcome?

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 11:30 Maximizing NACWA's Relevance for the Future

Some might argue that we have moved past the pandemic, but it has undeniably left an indelible mark on how we all conduct our business. This is perhaps most acutely felt by associations because of the social nature of their mission and purpose. This discussion will engage all participants on whether and how your views of Association participation have changed for you personally post-pandemic.

Discussion Prompts –

An association is premised on people coming together to engage in advancing shared priorities, which in the past relied heavily on the “inconvenience” of actually gathering together, in person. The pandemic, on the other hand, demanded separation and distance and did, in some instances, permanent injury to the ‘social muscles’ of many across the country and in the Association space.

Despite NACWA's overall success in navigating this changed mindset, there are trends of great concern regarding member engagement and participation; changing perceptions of member return on investment; less willingness to travel to in-person meetings and conferences; staff expectations for a work-life balance that impacts productivity (maybe positively and maybe negatively) all of which may necessitate a more thorough “rethink” of NACWA's Strategic Plan in 2024.

Think about the following:

- What makes attendance at meetings and conferences a valuable use of your time?
- What information are you yearning for and getting or not getting from NACWA/other water sector associations?
- Are other groups doing it better than NACWA?

We want every participant at the meeting to be prepared to talk for a minute or two about these questions and all thoughts are welcome!

11:30 – 11:45 Discussion Wrap-Up and Next Steps

11:45 Fall Strategic Leadership Meeting Adjourns

Afternoon

11:45 - 2:00 Board of Directors Luncheon and Meeting Δ

Salon C