Membership Survey Report

Strategic Planning Process | July 2023
Executive Summary

The League of Kansas Municipalities (the League) provides support for Kansas cities through advocacy, training, education, and facilitation. While each municipal organization holds the membership, the League serves the elected officials and appointed staff of nearly 600 cities and counties across the state.

Each community is unique – from its population to its form of government to its level of staff support to the stability of the governing body. This diversity adds to the richness of our state, but it also means that one size does not fit all.

For the League to best serve its members, it is engaging in a comprehensive strategic planning process over the course of 2023. Initial stakeholder engagement occurred via focus groups, findings of which helped to inform questions in the stakeholder survey.

From this survey of 541 responding members of the League, the Docking Institute finds:

**General Satisfaction and Value**

- A combined percentage of 72% are either very satisfied (46%) or somewhat satisfied (26%) with the current level of communication and engagement between their city/county and the League, and only 7% are dissatisfied.
- 77% are either very satisfied (47%) or somewhat satisfied (30%) with their city’s/county’s overall experience with the League, while only 5% are dissatisfied.
- When asked to rate the value their city/county receives for the amount paid in League dues, the single largest percentage (26%) rates value at a 10 on a 1 (low value) to 10 (very high value) scale, and the mean rating is 7.69.

**Recent Use of League Services**

- A large majority (84%) indicate having used a League service(s) over the past three years among those services grouped as “city resources” in the survey. More than half (55%) have used legal services and half have used legislative services. About one-third have used League employment services, and just under 20% have used the Employee Recognition Program.
- Only 16% of respondents indicate they are receiving comparable services to those provided by the League from other organizations or businesses.

**Assessing Main Activities of The League**

- Presented with eight statements and asked to respond on a strongly disagree to strongly agree scale, at or slightly greater than 60% either strongly or somewhat agree that the League: is a champion for Home Rule, helps connect cities to state agencies by relaying useful information, tells a compelling story about the value of cities and services they provide, communicates with member communities about how it can help them, and communications its own mission...
and services well to its members. Importantly, these statements have a much smaller combined percentage disagreeing, and disagreement is much lower than the percentages who indicate “don’t know” or “neither agree nor disagree”.

- Strong majorities (over half) also agree that the League helps communicate engage with their legislators and provides useful information about how to do their job. Importantly, these statements have a much smaller combined percentage disagreeing, and disagreement is much lower than the percentages who indicate “don’t know” or “neither agree nor disagree”.
- Only on collaborating well with other organizations does less than 50% agree, but this may be due to the relatively high percentage, just over 40%, who answer “don’t know.”

**Use and Value of League Legal Services**

- Among four types of League legal services, well over half of respondents use online resources, read legal articles, and call or email League attorneys for advice/information. Almost half (46%) attend trainings by attorneys. For all four legal services, most use them at “key points during the year” rather than monthly or more frequently.
- On average, those who use a legal service rate the services high on a 0 to 10, from no value to extremely valuable, with means ranging from a high of 8.25 on calling or emailing attorneys for advice/information to a low (but still strong) of 7.14 on reading legal articles provided by the League.

**Utility and Priorities of League Advocacy Activities**

- Using a 0 to 10 scale, from not useful to extremely useful, among League advocacy activities, identifying and communicating issues in the legislative session rates highest in utility (mean=7.97), followed closely by testifying at legislative hearings and weekly reports during the legislative session, both with means of 7.85.
- Only “legislative dinners” has a mean usefulness score less than 7 at a mean of 5.44, and it is also the advocacy activity with the highest percentage responding “don’t know” at 38%.
- Using a 0 to 10 scale, from not a priority to a very high priority, among six activities for their potential to improve legislators’ perceptions of cities, encouraging cooperation among state and city/county governments is highest (mean of 8.41), followed by educating public about essential services provided by local taxes (mean=8.36), and encouraging cooperation among local governments (mean=8.17).
- When provided with a check-all-that-apply list of three specific ways the League might better advocate for the needs and interests of cities/counties at the state and national levels, 57% selected strengthening advocacy and relationships with legislators, 56% selected researching and providing data-driven policy recommendations, and less than half (45%) selected enhancing partnerships with association or trade groups.
Allowed to write-in their most important, second, and third most important thing the League could do to make legislative advocacy more effective, a coding of responses into themes finds the theme most often mentioned as most important is education, followed by enhancing communication with League members, while among the second most important things, education is again most often mentioned, followed by identifying collaboration opportunities between the city/county/state.

**Current and Emerging Issues**

- Among seven possible initiatives mentioned for improving civility in local government engagements, the three initiatives with the highest average priority ratings on a 0 to 10 scale are training elected officials to work with city/county employees (mean=8.56), orienting potential local officials on issues of local government (mean=8.51), and promoting value of skilled professionals in local government (mean=8.4).
- Using a 0 to 10 scale, from not a priority to a very high priority for the League in serving its members, protecting local revenue streams from state usurpation is a strong priority, with a mean of 9.03 -- the highest mean rating in all survey results. This is followed by encouraging new people to participate in public service (mean=8.32), explaining the importance of strong cities for a vibrant state (mean=7.77), and inviting those not engaged with cities to participate in local government (mean=7.51).
- When provided with a check-all-that-apply list of three specific ways the League might collaborate with other regional or statewide organizations to advance shared goals and objectives, majorities consider increasing communication and information sharing between organizations (62%) and establishing joint initiatives and project (51%) to be useful. Just under half (47%) consider enhancing coordination of advocacy efforts useful.
- Allowed to write-in their most important, second, and third largest challenge facing their city/county right now, employee recruitment has the most frequent mentions as largest, the second largest, and the third largest challenge facing the member’s city/county right now. The theme with second most mentions as the largest challenge is finances/city budget, followed closely by housing availability. There is a notably large percentage (12%) identifying things grouped as the theme “economic development” as the third largest challenge.
- Allowed to write-in their most important, second, and third most beneficial training or professional development activity for their staff and elected officials, the theme most often mentioned as the most beneficial is orientation and basic training, followed by the theme of budget/bookkeeping/taxes, which is also the most often mentioned second most beneficial training/professional development theme. A notably percentage also mention public/human relations as the second most beneficial.
- When asked the open-ended question “What could the League be doing better to serve your city/county,” the most common mentioned things fall into the themes: additional trainings, make personal connections with cities/counties, and offer specific resources for small towns.