Background & Introduction

Founded in 1910, The League of Kansas Municipalities (The League) provides support for Kansas cities through advocacy, training, education, and facilitation.

As a part of a comprehensive strategic planning process being conducted in 2023, The League requested an assessment of recent trends in services provided and the overall health of the organization. The data summarized in this report highlights specific services to members like the annual conference, trainings, and publications but does not delve into legislative relations and advocacy, which is a primary function of The League. Information regarding The League’s finances, both generally and related to specific services, is included. The report also summarizes data on communications and social media efforts. Together, this information indicates the overall health of the organization and can be used to inform a new strategic plan.

Membership

The League has averaged around 591 members over the last five years, including 549 cities and 42 counties. Except for 2021, The League added members each of those years. Notably, 83 percent of the Kansas population resides in an incorporated city.

Although The League is an association for Kansas cities, some counties are members as well. County members receive many of the same benefits as cities, like access to budget tips, member rates on publications & registrations, and legal inquiry services.

In the last five years:

- 88% of Kansas cities have been members of The League
- 40% of Kansas counties have been members of The League
City Facts

Total Number of Incorporated Cities = 625

Total Population of the State = 2,913,805
Total City Population = 2,420,761

83.08% of the state’s population resides in an incorporated city.

Number of Cities
- 503
- 26
- 96

Class of City
- Cities of the First Class: 19.87%
- Cities of the Second Class: 10.66%
- Cities of the Third Class: 69.47%

Population Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Group</th>
<th>Number of Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25,000 and over</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 24,999</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 9,999</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 - 4,999</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 - 1,999</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 - 999</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 - 499</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 - 399</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 - 299</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - 199</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 100</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Form of Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Government</th>
<th>Number of Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission-Manager</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor-Council-Manager</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Mayor-Council</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated City-County</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial Overview

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 outline major revenues and expenses in the most recent fiscal year to provide a general understanding of how The League makes and spends money.

Figure 1.1: League Expenses during 2022

- Staff Salaries & Benefits
- Professional Memberships
- Travel & Training*
- Building & Improvements
- Equipment Related
- Publications & Printing
- KGJ
- Conference & Service Awards
- Meeting Expenses
- Office Supplies**
- General Overhead
- Computer Equip
- Personnel Programs
- Workshops & Seminar

*REGISTRATIONS

**ALSO INCLUDES PAPER, BOOKS, SOFTWARE & SUBSCRIPTIONS
Over the last decade, The League's annual net income has varied greatly. In 2016, The League Governing Body reviewed revenue and expenses and decided to restructure dues to add a base fee for cities and counties beginning in 2017 with the intention that excess revenue be kept in reserves to use in the future. The base fee brought financial stability to the organization and brought in about $250,000 in additional revenue.

In 2022, The League had planned to use reserved funds for the first time but did not as it turned out not to be needed. The Governing Body routinely reviews dues, revenue, expenses, and reserves and adjusts as necessary.

As noted by an asterisk in Figure 1.3 and most other graphs to follow, 2020 was the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, net income continued declining in 2021 and 2022, which does not necessarily indicate a trend because of variable revenue from cyclical publications and events (such as hosting Leadership Summit in 2021 then Governing Body Institute in 2022, which routinely bring in different amounts of revenue).
Figure 1.3 shows The League’s net income in the last 10 years. This is the only graph in the report that accounts for all revenues and all expenses. The League does not track staffing costs by program or major project, meaning all other charts in this document show only gross income. Charts that show gross income compare program specific revenues to direct costs. Staffing costs are not included.

The League operates as a governmental agency and is defined by state law as an instrumentality of its member cities. The powers and duties of The League are prescribed by state law and in bylaws adopted by the voting delegates of its member cities.

**Revenues**

Membership dues are The League's primary source of income. Cities, counties, and special districts (like libraries) can be members of The League by paying annual dues. Before 2017, annual income from dues remained relatively stable.
Figure 2.1 shows a substantial increase in income in 2017 due to the raised dues (base fee). Since then, income from dues has increased an average of $21,000 each year.

Apart from dues, The League provides additional services that generate income. Services that bring in a significant amount of revenue annually include:

- The Kansas Government Journal
- Publications and advertising
- Annual conference
- Trainings (workshops and seminars)
- Affiliate services

**Kansas Municipal Insurance Trust (KMIT)**
The League used to generate a significant amount of revenue from KMIT when it was a part of the organization. This revenue covered KMIT personnel salaries and expenses.
In 2013, KMIT separated from The League but continues to support the association as the only Endorsed Partner/sponsor of the organization. The League has received the following revenue from KMIT from multi-year agreements:

- $70,000 (2013-2017)
- $32,500 (2018-2020)
- $35,750 (2021-current)

The current agreement with KMIT expires at the end of 2023, and The League will work with KMIT to continue the relationship.

**Expenses**

**Staffing**

As in most associations or government agencies, most services are provided by fulltime staff, with contract labor used only occasionally. Staff salaries and benefits are a significant expense and have risen steadily since 2014 (Figure 2.2), as would be expected.

In 2012, the 15 fulltime positions included two dedicated to KMIT, which separated from the League in 2013. Although responsibilities and titles have changed over the years, and retirements of longtime staff (with accompanying leave payouts) account for variations in several years shown in Figure 2.2, the staffing level remains at 13 fulltime positions in 2023. Benefit expenses have remained about the same.
Building, Equipment, & General Overhead

The League spent an average of $148,863 annually in building and equipment related expenses from 2012 to 2022. Expenses have remained about the same year-to-year with only slight changes.

In the same 10 years, The League spent an annual average of $45,809 on overhead. General overhead includes expenses like annual audit fees, postage, bank fees, D&O/EPL insurance, telephone, etc. The amount spent on overhead increased notably in 2022 when The League hired an outside human resources firm to revise and update the personnel policies and help with HR matters.

Other Significant Expenses

Some of The League’s services are more costly than others. Other significant expenses will be addressed in more detail, including:

- Annual conference
- Printing and publishing (the Kansas Government Journal and other publications)
- Trainings (workshops and seminars)
- Registrations travel & training
Annual Conference

Conference Registration

Total conference registration has been on the decline since 2016, with a steep drop at the virtual conference in 2020 since sponsors and vendors did not participate (and in other years are included in registration counts). Figure 3.1 shows that overall registration was declining prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the registration trend from 2016 to 2019, The League would have expected to see a continued decline even without the negative impact from the pandemic. This forecast is represented by the red, dashed line in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Annual Conference Registration

It appears registration was up slightly in 2022 compared to what would have been expected based on the pre-pandemic trend. However, the declining trend in registrations may indicate the conference is potentially something to discuss during upcoming strategic planning.
The conference rotates its location every three years between Overland Park, Wichita, and Topeka. Although there is no way to establish a causal link, it is notable that registration appears to be lower during the years the conference was in Topeka (2015, 2018, and 2021).

According to Figure 3.2, a contributing factor to the reduction in registration was the significantly fewer conference vendors/sponsors and guests. Prior to 2019, it was typical for conference vendors to send multiple representatives to the conference. Since 2019, only a single vendor booth representative attends.

Comparatively, conference registration by City Officials has remained steadier, although it too varies. In recent years, the number of cities represented by and large has remained steady while cities more frequently send fewer representatives each, choosing instead to rotate attendance among their elected officials.

Figure 3.2: Annual Conference Registration by Attendee Type
Conference Finances

Since 2013, The League annual conference has grossed about $55,000 each year (revenues over direct expenses, not including staffing costs). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both revenues and expenses decreased starting in 2020. Interestingly, the 2020 virtual conference grossed well above average at around $84,000.

In the last two years, it appears both revenues and expenses have risen and are nearly back to the pre-2020 average. However, the 2022 conference only grossed around $20,000, which is notably less than other years.

Significant conference expenses include food and beverages, facility rental and audio/visual, speakers, and entertainment.

Figure 3.3: The League Annual Conference Revenues & Expenses

In Figure 3.3, an average of 12 percent of the total revenue represented by the blue line is from host city contributions. The city hosting the annual conference is asked to contribute $35,000. Prior to 2018, this goal was routinely met either by soliciting corporate contributions or dedicating other city revenue (such as hotel bed tax revenue).
Figure 3.4 highlights the changes in host city contributions over time. It shows that the amount of host city contributions has dropped in recent years.

Since 2018, gross conference profit has been affected in part by declining host city contributions. Other major contributing factors include stagnant conference registration rates and costs that vary among the sites, such as facility rental and food and beverage.

The past five years of data indicate that perhaps the current system of host city sponsorships should be reconsidered. Is $35,000 still the right number? Should The League play a somewhat more active role in raising the sponsorships in cooperation with host cities to ensure more consistency? Should host cities be invoiced for the balance when their fundraising effort falls short? Or should other actions be considered?

**Conference Location**

In recent years, some conference attendees have asked via the conference evaluation survey whether the conference can be held elsewhere (currently on a three-city rotation with Topeka, Overland Park, and Wichita). Current locations are the only ones in the
state with adequate square footage for the exhibition hall, general session, breakout space, and separate meal functions.

Without a minimum 60,000 square feet in exhibit space, the League would not be able to host the trade show, which provides an average of $70,000 in revenue from vendors. This continued support of vendors and sponsors offsets a large portion of conference expenses, which helps keep registration rates low for attendees.

In 2024, although the conference location was scheduled to be Topeka, due to factors beyond the control of either The League or the City of Topeka (the hotel has been in receivership and is in process of being auctioned), the conference is being relocated to Wichita. Assuming the hotel situation stabilizes, the intention is to return to the rotation among the three cities.

**Conference Days**

Some conference attendees also have suggested changing from the current Saturday-Sunday-Monday format in an attempt to increase attendance. In 2024, the conference in Wichita will be a Thursday-Friday-Saturday format partially due to facility availability and partially in an attempt to determine whether attendance will change.

The 2023 conference is also in Wichita but on the Saturday-Sunday-Monday format, which means comparing attendance between the two years should provide a good indication of whether the days of the week should change in future years.

**Conference Evaluation**

After each conference, City Officials and vendors/sponsors are asked to evaluate the annual conference. Figures 3.5 and 3.6 show the overall ratings given by attendees from 2013 to 2022.
Every year, the majority of attendees rated the conference as “excellent” or “good.” Only five total attendees in the last 10 years rated the conference as “poor.”

*DATA FROM 2020 AND 2021 ARE NOT INCLUDED IN FIGURE 3.6. THERE WERE NO EVALUATIONS GIVEN TO VENDORS/SPONSORS IN 2020. LEAGUE STAFF REPORTED NO DATA IN 2021 DUE TO INSIGNIFICANT RESPONSE RATE.*
The following pie charts help see the above 10 years of data summarized as averages instead of discreet data by year. On average, most attendees are satisfied with the conference.

Figure 3.7: 10-Year Average of Conference Evaluation from City Officials (792 responses)

Figure 3.8: 10-Year Average of Conference Evaluation from Vendors/Sponsors (214 responses)

*DATA FROM 2020 AND 2021 ARE NOT INCLUDED IN FIGURE 3.6. THERE WERE NO EVALUATIONS GIVEN TO VENDORS/SPELLORS IN 2020. LEAGUE STAFF REPORTED NO DATA IN 2021 DUE TO INSIGNIFICANT RESPONSE RATE
Training

The League offers a variety of training opportunities like workshops and seminars. Programmed curriculum is offered to City Officials through The Municipal Training Institute (MTI). General training attendance fell sharply in 2019 and 2020 but has since been on the rise.

The most popular trainings in the last five years were:

- Governing Body Institute*
- KOMA/KORA**
- Municipal Finance**
- Planning & Zoning***

*Offered every other year and is specific to newly elected officials

** Offered all five years.

***Offered three out of five years or more

According to Figure 5.1, income generated from training can vary greatly by year. Except for 2020, training expenses have remained relatively steady compared to income. To combat lower attendance levels and the COVID-19 pandemic, The League instituted more hybrid and fully virtual training events. These have contributed to a rise in attendance and engagement.

It is important to note that the expenses reported in Figure 5.1 do not include the staff time required to facilitate or teach workshops and seminars. In some cases, The League staff are the primary presenters of information at these events. In other cases, staff of member cities deliver the content, and sometimes contractors are paid to teach at these events.
Figure 5.1: Annual Training Revenues & Expenses

*GROSS INSTEAD OF NET IS USED BECAUSE STAFF TIME IS NOT INCLUDED IN THESE EXPENSE AMOUNTS.
Personnel Programs

LEAPS
The League Executive/Administrative Position Search (LEAPS) Program helps cities fill key staff positions such as city administrator, city manager, or occasionally other key positions like finance director. According to the website, “The League has successfully placed city executives in over 100 cities in Kansas.” (The League) Since 2015, The League has successfully hired 44 executives out of 56 requests for searches. Of those 44, almost half (21) of those hired still hold that position today.

Figure 7.1: LEAPS Program Successful Hires

Annual revenues from the LEAPs program ranged from $11,848 to $49,748. Expenses associated with the program are almost all staff time, however The League does not track staff hours associated with fulfilling contracts. Rates are calculated based on a city’s population and a base fee.
Youth Civic Education

The League offers a variety of free downloadable and interactive materials for students. The League also holds a 7th grade essay contest. While it does not generate any revenue, The League spends about $1,800 annually on this program, including awarding cash prizes to winning students.
Communications

The League communicates with members and the public in a variety of ways including the *Kansas Government Journal* (KGJ) and other publications, an electronic newsletter, social media, their website, and a mobile app.

2021 Communications Survey

In 2021, The League sent out a communications survey to League members and League News recipients. With a response rate of 20 percent, they received 442 survey responses. The overwhelming majority of respondents were affiliated with a city. Over half of respondents (59 percent) were 51 years old or older.

Overall, respondents were very satisfied with The League’s communications, specifically the clarity, purpose, and style of content as well as the overall effectiveness.

Communications Tools

Over half of respondents identified the following as main resources to get information:

- 82% League News
- 68% Website
- 62% KGJ
- 61% Listservs

Only 28 percent of respondents said they currently use social media to get information.

Usefulness of Communications Tools

Of all The League’s communications tools, respondents identified the password protected website, social media, and the *Kansas Government Journal* as the three least useful. Many respondents (37 percent) said they had issues accessing the password protected website, and almost a quarter of them (22 percent) were unaware of it.
Regarding the KGJ, many respondents commented the information is not current or applicable, or they do not have time to read.

**Kansas Government Journal (KGJ)**

The League publishes 10 issues of the KGJ per year. Included in the cost of their dues, each member organization of The League receives one subscription to KGJ. Any additional subscriptions require a separate purchase. According to Figure 4.1, annual subscriptions have remained steady over the last five years.

![Figure 4.1: Annual Subscriptions to the Kansas Government Journal](image)

As Figure 4.2 shows, publishing, printing, and distributing 10 issues per year is a costly endeavor. In 2015, the League reduced the number of yearly issues from 12 to 10. Income has declined over the last 10 years while expenses have increased slightly due to paper and postage costs. Notably, the expenses shown in Figure 4.2 do not include the staff time and effort required to produce the KGJ.
*GROSS INSTEAD OF NET IS USED BECAUSE STAFF TIME IS NOT INCLUDED IN THESE EXPENSE AMOUNTS.

**Other Publications**

In addition to KGJ, The League distributes other publications on a variety of topics. By far, the two most popular publications in the last five years are Standard Traffic Ordinance (average 4,241 annual orders) and Uniform Public Offense Code (average 3,885 annual orders).
League News

Currently, The League News (electronic newsletter delivered weekly via email) has 1,665 subscribers and a low rate of unsubscribing (0.04 percent). The top locations for subscribers are Wichita and Topeka.

The League increased the number of emails sent from 76,000 in 2021 to 117,506 in 2022. With that, the open rate (39 percent) and click rate (19 percent) also increased.

- 53% of subscribers open these emails often
- 9% open these emails sometimes
- 33% open these emails rarely

Social Media

To preface the following information on The League’s social media, it may be useful to understand what engagement standards are. “Engagement rates are the currency of the social media marketing industry” measuring the amount of interaction content receives compared to the account’s following or audience. “Most social media marketing experts
agree that a good engagement rate is between one percent to five percent. The more followers you have, the harder it is to achieve." (Sehl & Tien, 2023)

Of the four main social media accounts used by The League, three have an engagement rate over five percent. According to the social media management software Hootsuite, “an engagement rate higher than five percent is considered very high.” (Sehl & Tien, 2023)

**Facebook**

With 12,190 followers and an engagement rate of 7.56 percent, Facebook is The League’s most engaged social media platform.

The League made 229 posts in 2022 and had a post engagement rate of 12.11 percent. These posts made 295,000 impressions (meaning the number of times content entered a user’s screen) and reached 207,000 users. Posts with photos reached the most users (117,000), followed by albums (51,000), videos (31,000), and then links (3,600).

The cities that engage with The League’s Facebook the most are:

- 6% Wichita
- 3% Coffeyville
- 3% Independence
- 2% Garden City
- 2% Atchison
- 2% Derby

Interestingly, three-quarters (76 percent) of The League Facebook followers are women. The other quarter (24 percent) are men.

**Instagram**

Since starting the account in early 2022, The League has acquired 177 followers on Instagram. The account has a post engagement rate of 6.51 percent. The list below ranks reach by post type:
1. Photos (2,500)  
2. Reels (931)  
3. Carousel album (647)  
4. Videos (317)  
5. Stories (117)

The cities that engage with The League’s Instagram the most are:

- 8% Topeka
- 7% Lawrence
- 6% Wichita
- 4% Kansas City
- 4% Overland Park

Slightly more than half (58 percent) of followers are women, and slightly less than half (42 percent) are men.

**LinkedIn**

The League’s LinkedIn account currently has 628 followers, 300 of which followed the account in the last year. Competitor accounts did not gain nearly that many new followers in 2022. The account received:

- 1,287 reactions (like, celebrate, support, love, insightful, funny)
- 103 comments
- 70 reposts

The account has a post engagement rate of 7.59 percent. Last year, 424 unique visitors viewed The League’s LinkedIn page 881 times.

**Twitter**

Although The League’s Twitter account has 1,576 followers, this account has the lowest post engagement rate (2.51 percent) of all social media platforms. It is relevant to consider The League’s Twitter most active during the Legislative Session because Twitter is the ideal platform to push out brief summaries, breaking news, and alerts. In the last year, posts to the account received 338 likes, 95 retweets, 22 quote tweets, and 6 replies.
Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to provide a foundation of information to everyone participating in the 2023 strategic planning process. The assumption is that those participating care deeply about cities in Kansas and about The League.

It is the hope of the authors that The League’s recent 10 years of history may reveal opportunities to influence its priorities and activities going forward. Displaying data in this manner is intended to reveal factors influencing The League’s outcomes and potentially spark ideas about allocation of resources to fulfill the mission.

Bibliography


The League of Kansas Municipalities. (n.d.). *LEAPS.* [https://www.lkm.org/page/LEAPS?&hhsearchterms=%22leaps%22](https://www.lkm.org/page/LEAPS?&hhsearchterms=%22leaps%22)