ACWA'S FIVE-YEAR

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020 – 2024

ACWA
Association of California Water Agencies

Association of California Water Agencies Mission, Vision and Values

ACWA MISSION

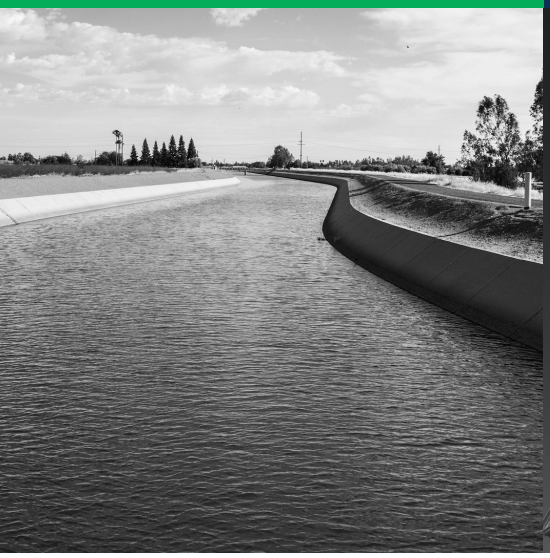
ACWA provides comprehensive leadership, advocacy and resources for California public water agencies to ensure a high quality and reliable water supply in an environmentally sustainable and fiscally responsible manner.

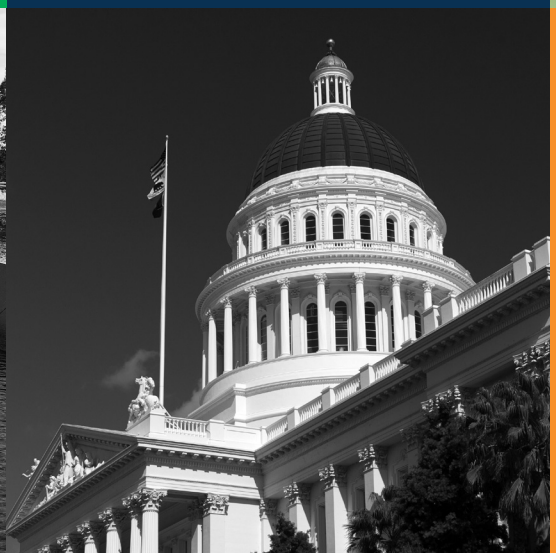
> This Strategic Plan is aspirational in nature, defining a visionary path forward to grow and evolve in the future. Development of the plan provides us the opportunity to focus on being ahead of the curve in all aspects of our business. – *Dave Eggerton, ACWA Executive Director*

ACWA VISION

ACWA envisions a California that values water as a precious natural resource that is used efficiently and sustainably in a changing climate from the headwaters to the ocean, with water infrastructure planned, maintained and operated to meet California water needs for generations to come.

ACWA





ACWA VALUES

- Public Service
- Collaboration
- Mutual Respect
- Resource Stewardship
- Solution-Oriented

Overview

In January 2019, ACWA's Board of Directors set out to reshape the future of the organization by moving from a two-year plan that identified goals in two categories – Policy Goals and Organizational Goals – to a longer, more comprehensive plan.

The new five-year plan will afford the association the benefit of a broader forecast of resources, as well as the capacity to align ongoing longer-term goals with shorter-term priorities, ultimately allowing for more direct and positive outcomes on high priorities for the association.

The plan's development was designed to seek input and alignment concurrently from ACWA membership, ACWA Board of Directors and ACWA staff. Under the leadership of a board appointed steering committee, the process included a comprehensive member needs assessment, two board level workshops, and staff level focus groups.

The Board of Directors will review the strategic plan, as necessary, every three years.

Annual Action Plan

This five-year strategic plan will have a corresponding annual action plan adopted by the ACWA Board in the first quarter of each calendar year to allocate resources and budget to achieve the goals and objectives and address the highest priority issues in furtherance of the strategic plan. The action plan will also include metrics to track performance and report to the Board on overall performance.

Strategic Plan Core Elements

The strategic plan has six core elements identified to serve as guiding principles for the organization as it invests time and energy to meet the mission and vision over the next five years.

CORE ELEMENTS DEFINED

Advocacy – Advocate for member interests on legislation, regulations and funding.

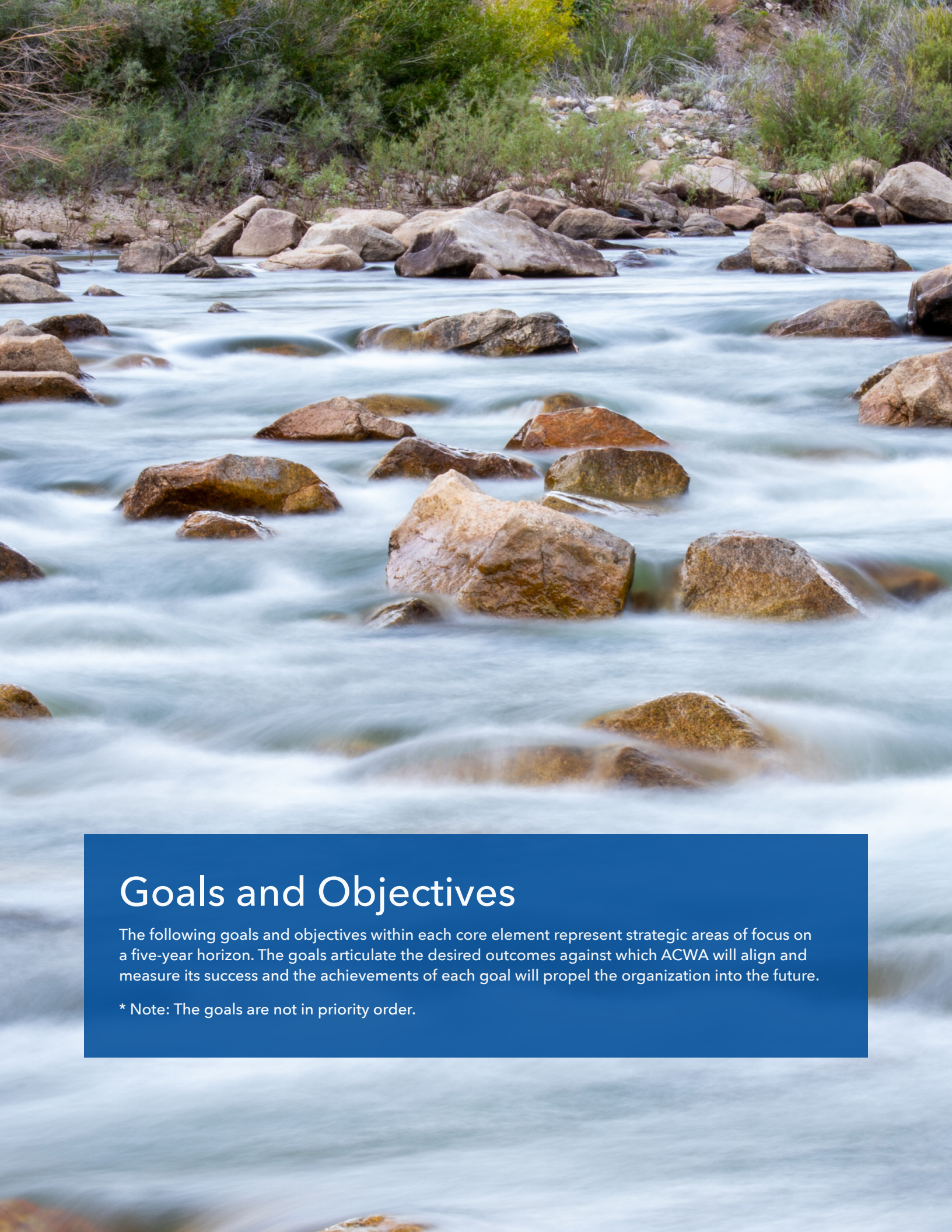
Connections – Build strong, lasting and trusted partnerships that provide interconnectivity among all sectors of the water industry.

Education – Invest in California's water future by providing opportunities through education, information and professional development for ACWA members, staff and the public.

Resources – Deliver high quality member services to support the mission of ACWA's member agencies.

Organizational Strength – Foster a collaborative and mutually respectful culture to ensure a positive experience for ACWA members and staff and continually invest in the financial health and organizational well-being of the association.

Innovation – Lead the industry on proactive advancements for the betterment of the communities, agricultural operations and businesses that ACWA members serve.



Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives within each core element represent strategic areas of focus on a five-year horizon. The goals articulate the desired outcomes against which ACWA will align and measure its success and the achievements of each goal will propel the organization into the future.

* Note: The goals are not in priority order.

CORE ELEMENT: Advocacy

Advocate for member interests on legislation, regulations and funding.

GOAL: Advocate for ACWA member interests at the U.S. Congress, the State Legislature and the federal and state regulatory agencies on both policy and funding issues

OBJECTIVES/POLICY PRIORITIES

- **Newsom Administration's Water Resilience Portfolio:** Serve as the water community leader in implementation of the Newsom Administration's Water Resilience Portfolio. Focus on preparation for the impacts of climate change and local control for water management. Seek financial and technical assistance from the state and federal governments and educate policy makers regarding the need to improve water supply reliability considering the effects of climate change, aging infrastructure and population growth.
- **Sustainable and Secure Agriculture:** Advance state and federal policies founded upon sound science that guarantee a reliable and sufficient water supply that is delivered through modern conveyance to ensure a healthy and sustainable agricultural economy for the next century.
- **Local Control of Water Resources:** Advocate that locally elected decision makers are best positioned to provide direction on providing a reliable and affordable water supply to their constituents.
- **21st Century Forecasting and Climate Adaptation:** Promote federal, state and local agency use of the latest technology to model the impacts of climate change and Atmospheric Rivers on precipitation, timing and type of runoff, needed water storage and optimization of conveyance to meet future water needs. Seek ongoing federal and state funding for Atmospheric River research and Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations to improve state and local water management, provide flood protection and improve public safety as result of the use of the most advanced and data driven technology for seasonal forecasting.
- **Infrastructure:** Advocate for an evaluation of existing state and federal water infrastructure projects for determination of necessary rehabilitation, redesign, or new facilities to meet future water storage, operation and conveyance needs. Advocate for state and federal financial support for both new and replacement water infrastructure, including advanced treatment facilities to comply with a growing number of proposed water quality regulations. Promote water infrastructure investments at all levels of government to achieve water supply resilience. Promote water supply reliability to meet California agricultural, public, industrial and ecosystem needs, including water supply reliability for the Colorado River and Salton Sea.
- **Headwaters Resiliency: S**upport landscape scale improvement of forest health and meadow restoration to increase useable runoff, improve forest ecology, reduce wildfire damage and benefit native fish and threatened forest species. State and federal governments must make biomass energy conversion, long-term mill construction and operation, and new uses for small diameter tree and brush cleared for healthy forest restoration a high priority to achieve forest health and wildfire safety objectives.
- **Fish Recovery:** Support state approval of the Voluntary Agreements that incorporate multiple benefit projects into the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan instead of the flow-only approach used by the State Water Resources Control Board to address endangered species and water supply reliability in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers and their tributaries. Provide leadership on Bay-Delta conveyance solutions.

OBJECTIVES/POLICY PRIORITIES

- **Newsom Administration's Water Resilience Portfolio: Sustainable Groundwater:** Advocate for a partnership with state, federal and local agencies to increase the amount, and control the timing of, groundwater recharge to achieve successful implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). This partnership should focus on minimizing agricultural land fallowing and promote multi-benefit projects that make recharge water available to achieve sustainability under the SGMA.
- **Effective Water Treatment:** Advocate for reasonable water quality standards based upon scientific and peer-reviewed health assessments that can be implemented by economically and technically feasible technology in an appropriate time frame.
- **Safe Drinking Water for All:** Promote safe drinking and clean water solutions and advance science based, peer reviewed drinking water quality standards in a manner that protects public health, while not working against affordability. Prioritize improvement of the supply and quality of drinking water to disadvantaged communities with the annual state funding provided by SB 200 (Monning) in a timely and sustainable manner. ACWA is committed to active involvement in ensuring that this funding is distributed in a solution-oriented manner that results in unsustainable systems becoming sustainable.
- **One State and One Water:** Develop and support policies that engage and enhance cooperation and collaboration among areas of the state holding differing water supply needs and views.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Support cost-effective sustainability programs to support coequal goals that will benefit the environment and promote thoughtful stewardship of natural resources, such as conserving energy and water and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Focus must be on multi-benefit projects that provide "win-win scenarios" for all stakeholders. Promote long-term water use efficiency and water reuse.
- **Energy-Water Nexus:** Recognize the important nexus between energy and water and advocate for statewide resilience in energy infrastructure and energy related policies that maximize the beneficial use of water.
- **Public Education:** Commit to a statewide effort to improve the general public's understanding and importance of planning, development and maintenance of water infrastructure to ensure a healthy California water supply.

GOAL: Engage the current and next generation of policy leaders in Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

OBJECTIVES

- Work to educate new policy makers across relevant sectors to ensure a broad understanding of California water issues
- Build collaborative relationships with policy makers and promote two-way engagement
- Partner with state and federal governments and other entities to cross train within the industry on water issues

GOAL: Serve as a trusted resource for policy makers and other stakeholders

OBJECTIVES

- Serve as an information hub for members of Congress, Legislators, agency officials, staff, other stakeholders and ACWA members on key policy issues
- Continue to provide accurate, high quality information
- Promote innovative projects to meet the new needs of California water

GOAL: Create a collaborative environment among all departments to meet policy goals

OBJECTIVES

- Promote an understanding of department roles and how they help advance ACWA's mission
- Work collaboratively throughout the organization to advance ACWA's policy initiatives
- Highlight member agency advancements on innovative water management practices

CORE ELEMENT: Connections

Build strong, lasting and trusted partnerships that provide interconnectivity among all sectors of the water industry.

GOAL: Build and strengthen trusted relationships with members and key stakeholders

OBJECTIVES

- Grow ACWA's impact through its grassroots outreach program
- Partner with other associations to add breadth to singular efforts
- Utilize state-of-the-art technology to expand ACWA's reach
- Explore opportunities for new relationships with non-traditional partners and stakeholders

GOAL: Continually invest in the essential relationship with ACWA JPIA

OBJECTIVES

- Work collaboratively to advance the shared goals of each organization
- Promote the value of a shared membership
- Protect the mutually beneficial relationship between each organization

GOAL: Serve as a hub to connect members to members

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a forum for decision makers to interact and communicate with membership
- Develop a platform for information sharing among members
- Encourage cross-regional programs and communication through ACWA's regions

CORE ELEMENT: Education

Invest in California's water future by providing opportunities through education, information and professional development for ACWA members, staff, community leaders and the public.

GOAL: Provide continuous stream of trusted information on key issues

OBJECTIVES

- Offer high quality, content rich educational programs and events throughout the state
- Develop robust interactive trainings via webinars and other online platforms
- Create an avenue where members provide input on program content and outcomes
- Utilize technology to bring information to members in real-time

GOAL: Increase public knowledge and awareness of water industry and the importance of water to California's future.

OBJECTIVES

- Serve as a trusted resource for the general public and the media
- Expand public education efforts to broaden ACWA's scope and reach
- Create strategic communication modules to assist members with reaching their customers
- Enhance public outreach through social media and other platforms
- Build partnerships to reach the general public

GOALS: Advance water professionals through growth opportunities

OBJECTIVES

- Serve as a channel for facilitating member-to-member mentoring opportunities
- Build capacity within organization to grow operational certification and other educational offerings
- Evaluate and enhance continuing educational programs for attorneys and other professionals

GOALS: Promote leadership and water industry education through scholarships, internships and other offerings

OBJECTIVES

- Explore the creation of a foundation to enhance financial investments
- Develop ongoing partnerships with institutions of higher education
- Broaden relationships with corporate partners

CORE ELEMENT: Resources

Deliver high quality member services to support the mission of ACWA's member agencies.

GOAL: Promote and protect ACWA's overall brand

OBJECTIVES

- Proactively promote ACWA as the premier California water association
- Uphold reputation within the industry and beyond
- Build new partnerships to help expand and enhance the overall brand
- Promote the value of ACWA

GOAL: Enhance overall member experience

OBJECTIVES

- Continually engage members through regions, committees and other programs
- Promote value of ACWA membership to cities
- Add value and connect members through association website and other communication tools
- Provide a platform for member input to be shared
- Encourage forward thinking to continually advance the association

GOAL: Empower members with resources through ACWA Associates and other partners

OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen partnerships and opportunities with ACWA Associates
- Continue to grow sponsorship programs and opportunities
- Apply "out of the box" strategies to enhance the ACWA Preferred Provider program
- Seek new opportunities to maximize ACWA member's buying power

GOAL: Lead on adapting to changing workforce.

OBJECTIVES

- Become a partner with members and the water community to ensure highly engaged and qualified water professionals are available for the future
- Promote a diverse and inclusive environment across the organization and industry
- Develop up and coming water leaders internally and externally

CORE ELEMENT: Organizational Strengths

Foster a collaborative and mutually respectful culture to ensure a positive experience for ACWA members and staff and continually invest in the financial health and organizational well-being of the association.

GOAL: Build a culture of teamwork that includes understanding, effective communication, and empathy

OBJECTIVES

- Value each other's perspectives and roles
- Raise understanding of roles and responsibilities among departments
- Create a safe space to resolve disputes effectively and professionally
- Create and maintain a positive and healthy work environment
- Ensure accountability and consistency across the organization

GOAL: Raise the bar on internal customer service

OBJECTIVES

- Raise awareness on internal roles and which customers each department serves
- Improve internal communications across the organization
- Implement a regular and ongoing process to gauge success and identify needs for improvements
- Incorporate technology to improve internal customer service

GOAL: Attract and retain highly qualified ACWA staff

OBJECTIVES

- Provide competitive compensation and benefits package
- Continually invest in employees and their well being
- Promote work-life balance
- Provide succession planning at all levels of the organization
- Promote internal career development and encourage staff to journey map their ACWA career
- Promote the value of careers in public service

GOAL: Enhance financial and operational strength of association

OBJECTIVES

- Make fiscally responsible decisions on a long-term horizon
- Invest in the business of being a non-profit association
- Employ strategies to maintain high member retention and continuously grow membership base
- Optimize utilization of member resources
- Incorporate longer-term financial planning across the organization
- Further develop non-dues revenue opportunities with tangible outcomes

CORE ELEMENT: Innovation

Lead the industry on proactive advancements for the betterment of the communities, agricultural operations and businesses that ACWA members serve.

GOAL: Invest in technology to strengthen organization and improve performance

OBJECTIVES

- Provide the most current technology that best meets staff needs to maximize efficiencies and productivity and benefits ACWA member engagement
- Evaluate current suite of technology tools and identify areas for improvement
- Utilize technical & scientific advances to complement ACWA's advocacy, education and outreach efforts
- Develop an effective and collaborative process for selecting and implementing new technology

GOAL: Understanding the value of incorporating change and progress

OBJECTIVES

- Encourage member input and best practices to be shared openly
- Create an environment where flexing to change is encouraged
- Deploy innovation and problem solving across the industry
- Promote continued state and federal investments in Atmospheric River research and Forecast Improved Reservoir Operations to improve water supply reliability standards
- Foster innovation and the use of new technologies to meet the changing needs of the water industry
- Empower members and staff input and allow space for new ideas in all areas of the organization
- Highlight member agency innovations to actively share ideas
- Explore the creation of an innovation committee

GOAL: Empowering our work through harnessing data

OBJECTIVES

- Capture member data in a useful, pragmatic and secure system
- Serve as a conduit of data to help advance the goals of the membership
- Promote state and federal investments in advanced technology to assist with climate change adaptation and water resource management
- Proactively canvass members for data and innovation
- Invest in our collective effort to understand complex issues to find solutions through studies, opinion research and technical assessments

ACWA Strategic Planning Steering Committee

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Brad Sherwood, Region 1 Chair

Region 2
Terri Daly, Local Government Committee Chair

Region 3
Brian Poulsen, State Legislative Committee Chair

Region 4
Pam Tobin, Region 4 Chair

Region 5
Sarah Palmer, Region 5 Vice Chair

Region 6
Bill Diedrich, Agriculture Committee Chair

Region 7
Paul Hendrix, Region 7 Vice Chair

Region 8
Steve Blois, Region 8 Chair

Region 9
G. Patrick O'Dowd, Federal Affairs Committee Chair

Region 10
DeAna Verbeke, Region 10 Vice Chair

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Irvine Ranch Water District (Region 10)

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