2020 - 2022 Strategic Plan

Serve & Conserve Today.
Sustain Tomorrow.
Protect Our Resources Forever.

www.serviceauthority.org
Chair's Message

The Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) is emerging into a period that offers vast opportunities and enormous challenges that will be difficult to navigate without careful planning and a clear vision for the future.

That vision is encapsulated in this 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, which will guide us into the future. The ACSA’s Board of Directors and Management Team collaborated to assess key industry trends and gaps in service to identify the critical factors important to ACSA’s long-term success.

We have a strong course of action with clear goals and objectives. The detailed steps for implementation and monitoring will guide ACSA’s progress for years to come.

I look forward to working with the Board and our Management Team to ensure ACSA reaches its full potential on behalf of our customers.

Executive Director's Message

It has been a great pleasure to work with the Board of Directors and ACSA staff to examine our organizational goals and set a strategic direction that will ensure we remain accountable to our customers and meet the challenges that lie ahead, which range from meeting federal mandates to repairing our aging infrastructure and replacing a maturing, knowledgeable workforce. One goal has never changed: providing safe, clean, reliable Albemarle water.

This 2020-2022 Strategic Plan is a blueprint for excellence in customer service, technology, and environmental sustainability. The services we provide are vital to every person, business, and community in Albemarle County. We will use this plan as a clear roadmap for efficient and effective performance; financial responsibility; outreach and leadership; and high-quality water.

We look forward to the actions we will take, and the impacts we will have, in making sure that every dollar invested in us by our customers goes farther, as we improve our services to them and the rest of our community.

Table of Contents

4 Who We Are  5 Our Mission, Vision, & Values  6 Our Planning Process
10 Major Initiatives  11 Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)
12 Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS)  13 Additional Areas of Focus
14 The ACSA So Far  15 ACSA Board & Management Team
The Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) distributes treated water and collects sewage for treatment, while maintaining, expanding, and replacing the infrastructure within the service area. We were created by the County Board of Supervisors in 1964 with the Crozet community as its sole customer.

In the 1960s the South Rivanna Dam was constructed and several subdivisions were developed throughout the County, such as Carrsbrook, Woodbrook, Westmoreland, Northfields, Berkeley, Hessian Hills, Montvue, Colthurst, Flordon and West Leigh.

Who We Are

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, these systems were acquired by the County for the ACSA, and the County purchased water from the City of Charlottesville supply to provide all these areas with public water, and eliminate their well systems. In 1973, the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) was formed and became the wholesale provider of water and wastewater treatment for the City and ACSA.

The ACSA, now more than 50 years later, provides water distribution and wastewater collection services to more than 20,000 customers. The community enjoys water drawn from a protected watershed contained almost entirely within the County’s borders.

We maintain close to 350 miles of water lines and nearly 300 miles of sewer mains, including those serving the urban areas of Albemarle County, and nearby communities of Scottsville and Crozet.
Our Vision

Serve and conserve today, sustain tomorrow, and protect our resources forever.

Our Mission

With pride and dedication, we serve our customers by providing clean, safe, and reliable water, exemplary wastewater services, and fire protection infrastructure.

Together with our community partners, we maintain and improve our infrastructure in a timely, cooperative, and financially responsible manner.

Our Values

The ACSA is committed to providing the highest quality customer service that:

A - ALIGNS to our values of honesty, trust, integrity, mutual respect, open communication, and employee empowerment.

C - COMMITS to our community through responsiveness and collaboration. We actively promote conservation and environmental stewardship.

S - STRIVES for professional excellence by maintaining consistent and fair policies across the organization, and encouraging pride and dedication to ensure a healthy working environment.

A - ASPIRES to practice strategic foresight and fiscal responsibility while embracing innovation.
2020 – 2022 Strategic Plan:
Our Planning Process
With the successful completion of the Albemarle County Service Authority’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the leadership of the ACSA set their sights on proposing and implementing a new, three-year Strategic Plan for 2020 through 2022. The plan is specifically focused on major projects that will move us forward and lay the groundwork for a successful decade and beyond.

Most strategic plan processes review a utility’s strategic issues and identify gaps so they can be addressed. For the ACSA, we have identified such areas that we believe can be attended to within the three-year timespan of the plan, and advance us forward for the future. They are our Advanced Metering Infrastructure - AMI for short - and a new Computerized Maintenance Management System, or CMMS.

Before we discuss these initiatives in greater detail, we at the ACSA wanted to detail how we came to determine that these two projects, along with several other topics to tackle, which would serve as the heart of our plan.

The ACSA developed our 2020-2022 Strategic Plan using the following utility best practices to help identify gaps in our services:

**UTILITY BENCHMARKING:**
The ACSA was one of 129 nationwide utility participants in the 2017 American Water Works Association’s (AWWA) Utility Benchmarking Program. AWWA leads the water industry as the largest nonprofit scientific and educational association in the world. It is dedicated to helping its more than 4,000 utility members with the management and treatment of their water and wastewater.
Our Planning Process

The utility benchmarking program provided the ACSA with a holistic view of the organization. We are proud to tell you we ranked high in strategic planning and strategic plan implementation; long-term financial planning; risk management (emergency planning); governing body transparency and accountability; drought response/water shortage contingency plan; source water protection plan; and leadership effectiveness.

Some areas for improvement were found and they included our current CMMS platform and our customer involvement program, both of which are addressed in the AMI and CMMS projects.

**EFFECTIVE UTILITY MANAGEMENT (EUM):**
The ACSA staff used the Effective Utility Management (EUM) ranking process to look at current management areas and rank criteria for current or expected challenges. EUM is a nationally recognized strategic planning tool used by U.S. EPA, AWWA, the Water Environment Federation and other top water organizations to use as an organizational self-assessment.

EUM focuses on ten key management dimensions, including 1) water resource and supply adequacy; 2) water quality – clean and safe water; (3) customer satisfaction; (4) community sustainability and economic development; (5) employee and leadership development; (6) financial viability; (7) operational optimization; (8) infrastructure stability; (9) operational resiliency – vulnerability assessment; and (10) community and customer stakeholder understanding and support.

**BEST PRACTICES REVIEW PANEL:**
Three experienced utility managers from outside of the ACSA spent two days reviewing the utility. The panel highly rated the ACSA in a number of management areas. They identified two areas for the ACSA to strategically address: Advanced Metering Infrastructure and Computerized Maintenance Management.
Our Planning Process

ACSA CUSTOMER SURVEY:
ACSA staff developed a survey for our customers to gain their feedback and input to inform our strategic planning process. Nearly 1,200 customers responded and we are pleased to report the results showed a high level of customer satisfaction. When it came to overall satisfaction with the ACSA, 94.72% of our customers approved of how we conduct ourselves.

There is always more to improve and our customers did express a strong desire to receive water leak notifications, as well as wanting a new customer portal to manage their accounts. These asks are components of the AMI project.

2019 Customer Survey Results (% Satisfied)

- Overall Satisfaction: 94.72%
- Customer Service Satisfaction: 97.52%
- Water Information: 97.43%
- Water Quality: 92.76%
- Water Rates: 89.75%

EMPLOYEE INPUT:
To inform the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan from the employee point-of-view, the ACSA used an extensive employee survey and a series of staff meetings to gain their knowledgeable feedback.

The results mirrored the AWWA’s findings. While our employees rated the utility high in a number of areas, they honestly expressed concerns in the areas of AMI and CMMS. We also reviewed the ACSA’s present Vision and Values statements.
2020 – 2022 Strategic Plan: Major Initiatives
Major Initiatives

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)

The first of the ACSA’s two major projects under the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan is the implementation of advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) throughout our water system.

Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) is an integrated system of technologically advanced water meters, communications networks, and data management systems that enables enhanced two-way communication between utilities and their customers. This upgrades the customer experience, supports green initiatives, adds efficiencies, and provides strategic information for utility decision-making.

With AMI, customers can gain 24/7 access to their water usage through a web portal accessible through their computer or smartphone and choose to receive text or email alerts about leaks or unusual usage. AMI also improves communication between customers and billing staff; both can look at the same real-time data while discussing accounts.

A major benefit of implementing AMI is the reduction of water wastage. Customers are provided with a more accurate picture of their water use, enabling them to adjust it as desired. Both the ACSA and our customers can check their usage more often, allowing leaks to be found in minutes, enabling repairs to take place before volumes of water are wasted and large bills are received.

The ACSA gains a major operational advantage with AMI: the increased ability to monitor water usage remotely without the expense of sending meter readers into the field, saving energy costs and reducing employee risk. To properly evaluate our enlistment of AMI, the ACSA conducted a feasibility study to ensure an investment in AMI would provide us with our desired outcomes. The report detailed how AMI would positively impact: customer service; the availability and usability of information; engineering and revenue analytics; automation and systems integration; and the billing process.

Following the feasibility report, the ACSA’s Board approved a recommended approach and deployment timeline in line with the Strategic Plan. The process will enable the ACSA to fully maximize its use of the new technology.

How AMI Works

Usage data from your water meter is transmitted to the ACSA.

The data is relayed across the ACSA’s communications network to its offices.

The ACSA reviews the water usage data for customer billing and leak detection.

The ACSA’s Customer Portal and updated bill makes the information always available and easy to read.
Major Initiatives

Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS)

Computerized Maintenance Management Systems (CMMS) enable utilities to schedule, track, and monitor maintenance activities to provide cost, inventory, personnel, and reporting history. It will improve the overall efficiency of utility operations and will apply the latest technologies toward streamlining operational processes.

The ACSA, through its benchmarking work with AWWA, determined that its current maintenance management system was not meeting the long-term needs of the utility. Its reliance on manual data entry, lack of connection to our Geographic Information System (GIS), and lack of a web portal for customer service requests impose a time-consuming and inefficient system on our staff. A key component of the new CMMS will be its near-real-time updating of customer service requests, which will enable us to better track their progress through to the completion of the work.

As a result, the ACSA began moving towards the acquisition of a successful CMMS solution. The ACSA’s board appropriated funds to enable staff to move forward with the procurement of a utility-wide solution. Every department from within the ACSA was represented on a team focused on finding a class-leading software solution and enabling its proper implementation.

Following a transparent proposal process, Cityworks was selected because it provides a centralized database with direct integration with the ACSA’s GIS system. The new system will offer a customer web portal for the 24/7 creation of customer service requests; improved inventory and asset management; and enhanced tracking of work orders and asset inspections.

The software is being configured to help seamlessly transfer our business processes from the old system to the new one, adapting them to take full advantage of the new CMMS system. The integration will take place under the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. The end result of this effort? Improved customer service. Improved tracking and usage of the ACSA’s assets. Improved efficiency in the performance of our duties.

What A Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) Does:

- Tracks Work Orders
- Records Asset Histories
- Schedules Tasks
- Takes Customer Work Requests
- Manages Inventories
- Assist with Inventory Audits
Additonal Areas of Focus

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan will not just direct attention to the AMI and CMMS projects, but it will also aim to address multiple goals that will set the utility on a positive course for the future.

Among the added areas of focus under the plan are the following:

**Succession Planning:** Utilities across the country are facing the impacts of an aging workforce and loss of institutional knowledge. The ACSA will continue its succession planning efforts, using mentoring and professional development initiatives to prepare the ACSA for future waves of managerial retirement.

**Best Practice Inclusion:** The ACSA will continue striving to learn from the best in the water utility business, scheduling best practices utility visits to engage with leaders from other jurisdictions.

**Emergency Response Plan:** Under the America’s Water Infrastructure Act, the ACSA will complete training and checklists and our emergency preparedness to avoid water disruptions to our customers, building on our goal to be a highly reliable water provider. We will also incorporate a formal business continuity plan for operations in times of crisis, adding to system reliability.

**Improved Data Management and Utilization:** The ACSA will explore the creation of a strategic implementation plan to best manage for upcoming data: GIS, Financial, SCADA, CMMS, AMI, and System Modeling. We’ll also implement an updated financial system.

**Implementation of IT Risk Assessment:** The ACSA is taking a proactive approach to cybersecurity, implementing measures to further protect our computer/IT assets and data.

**Facility Master Planning:** A long-term plan to ensure the ACSA can and will grow to meet the operational requirements to provide high-quality customer service.

**Water and Energy Audits:** The ACSA will incorporate utility best practices to reduce water loss using tools to identify water leaks throughout our system. The first audit is scheduled for 2020 and is expected to be carried out on an annual basis. The ACSA will also research and establish an energy efficiency initiative.

**Employee Pay Plans:** The ACSA, in addition to its succession planning, will conduct annual, “market rate” recommendations to stay competitive as an employer in our area. We will emphasize competitiveness and internal equity in an effort to keep top performers working on behalf of our customers to provide the best service possible.
The ACSA So Far

20, 252 Customer Accounts
75,373 Residents Served
1.7 BILLION Gallons Sold (2019)
50.4 Square Miles Covered
353 Miles of Water Mains
298 Miles of Sewer Mains
2,747 Fire Hydrants
10,250 Valves Maintained
9,153 Sewer Manholes
21 Pumping Stations
8 Water Tanks
ACSA Board & Staff

Board of Directors

Chair: Clarence Roberts, Rivanna District
Vice Chair: Jennifer Sulzberger, Samuel Miller District
Richard Armstrong, Scottsville District
Bill Kittrell, White Hall District
Kimberly Swanson, Rio District
Charles Tolbert, Jack Jouett District

Legal Counsel: James M. Bowling, IV
Executive Director: Gary O’Connell

Staff