



## Wires Alone May Not Get You There

**T**he industry is changing and so are customer expectations. Customers want simplicity, convenience and high quality service from their utility. Hometown Connections gives APPA members a competitive advantage with value-added products and services designed specifically for public power utilities.

# 20 YEARS AND COUNTING

Hometown Connections prepares for next phase of service to public power

Celebrating 20 years of service to public power, Hometown Connections, Inc. (HCI) has in place a new ownership structure providing the resources to expand into managed technology solutions and other new services. HCI is poised to help community-owned utilities tackle their most pressing technology, workforce and management challenges far into the future.

Back in 1998, the American Public Power Association (APPA) created a subsidiary — Hometown Connections International LLC — to help negotiate with industry vendors as a group and prepare community-owned utilities for retail customer competition.

The retail market did not evolve as expected, but HCI continued to work with leading industry vendors to create pricing and programs designed to improve the performance of community-owned utilities.



Along the way, HCI developed an expanding set of utility management, strategic planning and organizational consulting services delivered by staff members and industry partners.

During its first 20 years of service to public power, HCI provided products and services to more than 900 organizations and saved public power more than \$18 million collectively through group discount programs.

In June 2018, to create an organization with the ability to address today's new and pressing industry challenges, Hometown Connections, International LLC became Hometown Connections, Inc. Formed jointly by five public power joint action agencies including AMP, and

no longer a subsidiary of APPA, the new HCI is a national non-profit utility services organization offering municipal utilities guidance and access to quality products and services from a trusted entity. The new HCI has the financial and personnel resources to expand into critical areas such as making advanced metering accessible to municipal systems of all sizes.

## Working for Public Power

The primary purpose of HCI remains unchanged — to help community-owned utilities obtain the products/services they need to survive and thrive in an ever-changing electric utility marketplace. HCI's mission is to collaboratively provide innovative, industry-leading solutions in a cost-effective manner to meet the unique needs of community-owned utilities.

HCI believes in preserving the benefits of living and working in communities where local citizens control the pricing and operation of their electric, gas, water and wastewater services. HCI is a resource to municipal utilities of all sizes, facilitating access to technology, services and other solutions from industry-leading companies.

The products and services offered through HCI include a full range of advanced grid solutions, as well as consulting support in the areas of organization assessment, strategic planning, governance development, customer service, market research and staffing. By working closely with 14 vendor companies and fostering cooperative relationships among them, HCI develops integrated solutions for public power.

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## HCI products and services

### AESI

*Cyber and Physical Security Consulting*

### Apogee Interactive

*Customer Engagement/Energy Analysis*

### Clevest

*Mobile Workforce Solutions*

### Cogsdale Corporation

*Customer Information Solutions*

### GreatBlue Research

*Market Research Services*

### Hometown Connections

*Utility Management Consulting and Research  
Smart Cities Advantage AMI Solution*

### IPKeys Power Partners

*Meter & Operational Data Management  
System/IT Services*

### Katama Technologies, Inc.

*Technology Planning and Implementation*

### MFP-Connect™

*Energy Workforce Solutions and  
Compensation Studies*

### Milsoft Utility Solutions

*Software for a Smarter Grid*

### N-Dimension Solutions Inc.

*Cybersecurity Monitoring/Assessment*

### PowerSecure

*Distributed Generation, LED Lighting*

### The Energy Authority

*Energy Trading and Risk Management Services*

### Utility Financial Solutions, LLC

*Cost of Service Studies/Rate Design*

### Marsh Wortham Power Gen Insurance

*Property and Cyber Liability Insurance, Voluntary  
Employee Benefits Program*

HCI communicates with municipal utilities nationally with the continuing support of the APPA and regionally through a network of affiliated joint action agencies, state associations and former public power executives. The HCI network of relationships in 36 states reaches 85 percent of all public power utilities and 83 percent of public power retail customers.

## HCI Ownership



## HCI sales and marketing network

Alabama Municipal Electric Auth.\*

American Municipal Power, Inc.\*

Electric Cities of Georgia

ElectriCities of North Carolina

Energy Northwest

Florida Municipal Electric Assoc.

Illinois Municipal Electric Agency

Indiana Municipal Electric Assoc.

Indiana Municipal Power Agency

Kentucky Municipal Utilities Assoc.

Michigan Municipal Electric Assoc.

Minnesota Municipal Utilities Assoc.

Missouri Public Utility Alliance\*

Missouri River Energy Services

Mun. Electric Systems of Oklahoma

Nebraska Municipal Power Pool

Northern California Power Agency\*

Oklahoma Municipal Power Auth.

Piedmont Mun. Power Agency

Southern Minn. Mun. Power Agency

Tenn. Mun. Electric Power Assoc.

Texas Public Power Association

Vermont Public Power Supply Auth.\*

William Acee—New England, New York,  
New Jersey

Phyllis E. Currie—California

Thomas E. Nanney—Tennessee

Paul H. Allen, PE—Reliable Public Power  
Provider (RP3) Consultant

\*Owner Hometown Connections, Inc.

## Full speed ahead

Each public power utility must tackle today's industry challenges and make plans for a viable future. Change has never been more prevalent—regulatory, technological, financial and workforce changes are putting great pressure on utilities. Staff is retiring faster than replacements can be hired. Technologies to boost reliability and efficiency are expensive to deploy. Customers expect instant access to account information and service status. Cyber and physical security threats loom. Too many municipal utilities are at risk of being left behind. HCI is designing new services and programs to help municipal utilities address their most pressing needs.

## Advanced Metering Program

The first major initiative of the new HCI is the Advanced Metering Program. It provides AMP members and other municipal utilities with a number of benefits when upgrading their electric and water meters, including superior customer service capabilities, increased billing efficiency and decreased system losses. The Advanced Metering Program's pioneering design provides customers with a holistic solution, leveraging extensive public utility experience and partnerships with expert service providers focused on reducing management complexity, lowering long-term risk, improving operational and system efficiencies, and forecasting/predicting future costs of complex technology systems. Public utility systems utilizing the program will deploy a best-of-breed infrastructure (meters, wireless network communications, applications and systems integrations) enabling the use of and support for a wide range of innovative and advanced technologies to serve the utility's current needs and provide a platform for future smart city initiatives.

In the months ahead, HCI will share information about additional new and exciting services, keeping its focus on the benefits of joint action in public power, through which utilities band together to acquire the support they need.

*"As it has been for 20 years and will be far into the future, its an honor and privilege for HCI to be owned by and serve public power."*

*Article submitted by Tim Blodgett, President and CEO of Hometown Connections, Inc. Tim joined the organization in 1998 and has worked with many public power utilities in the areas of strategic consulting and board development, with an emphasis on continuous improvement. He is a frequent speaker at industry forums on trends in public power, the benefits of long-term planning and effective utility governance. 🌊*

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