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Transformational Consulting Solutions for Community-Owned Utilities

By Staff of Hometown Connections, Inc.

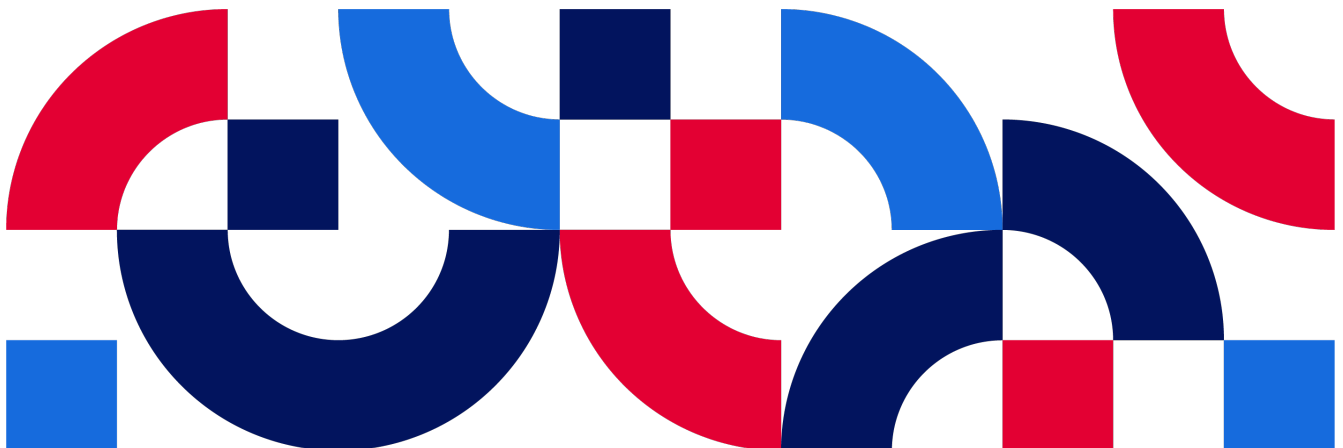


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Hometown Connections Consulting Solutions

Introduction

Hometown Connections, Inc. takes pride in having been a resource for public power for more than 20 years. We work closely with governing bodies, executives, and staff from scores of utilities across the United States with the common goal of strengthening public utilities and the value they bring to their local communities.

Consulting and Education Support

Services from Hometown Connections Include consulting assignments focused on the unique requirements of the organization as well as generic training classes or workshops.

The Hometown Connections management consulting team has extensive experience facilitating initiatives for utilities to reach excellence in governance, strategic planning, customer service, process improvement, talent management, and overall achieving higher levels of performance.

Board Governance

Maintain a clear understanding of the industry's complex technology, regulatory, financial, and human resource issues with Board Development solutions from Hometown Connections. Governing boards and city council members overseeing community-owned utilities need to understand their roles and responsibilities as stewards of the city's utility services.

Hometown Connections staff briefs governing officials on industry conditions and offers training on how to work with, and guide, the utility staff.

Hometown Connections organizes its governance development consulting assignments, workshops, and courses around these primary topics—with ability to customize content to the needs of individual utilities, state associations, or joint action agencies.

Governing Board Development: Building and Sustaining an Effective Team

Hometown Connections addresses how to assemble, onboard, and maintain a high performing board.

Topics covered include:

- Succession planning
- Attracting viable board candidates
- Candidate orientation
- Orientation for new board members (and existing too!)
- Building a strong board culture
- Mechanics of a good board meeting

Duties, Responsibilities and Legal Obligations of Public Power Governing

Hometown Connections reviews the common requirements of most public power governing boards.

Foundational information for the board:

- Organization-specific: charter, by-laws
- Independent utility governing board: legal relationship and responsibilities to the government agency that formed the utility
- State-specific rules that may speak to open meetings and records, conflicts of interest, training required, potential PUC oversight, etc.
- Legal counsel
- Key Board Responsibilities
- Strategic planning
- Financial oversight and planning

The Voice of the Customer: The Board's Role in Representing Owners, Customers and Other Stakeholders

Hometown Connections covers how the utility governing board can establish itself as the proper voice of the organization's customers/owners:

- How to "be" the voice of the customer as board members
- How to be a conduit of information between the customers/owners of the utility and the utility
- How to communicate with elected/appointed officials in other agencies and levels of government

Measuring for Success: Performance Monitoring and Accountability for Boards

Hometown Connections examines feedback mechanisms for the CEO and how the governing board can pursue its own continuous improvement opportunities.

- Monitoring organizational performance
- Evaluating and Managing the CEO
- Self-assessment tools for the CEO

Strategy

Hometown's consultants help public utilities address today's business management challenges and advance towards a successful future.

Strategic Planning for Long-Term Utility Effectiveness

The Hometown Connections proven strategic planning process applies to utilities of all sizes and services.

- Develops a practical, step-by-step blueprint for adapting to specific market conditions, regulatory changes, and the evolving expectations of customers
- May update existing strategic plans
- Benefits from an efficient and time-saving process that places a premium on simplicity, flexibility and logic
- Avoids the complexity and rigidity of other approaches that can grind a strategic planning effort to a halt

Strategic Issues that will Determine the Future of Public Power and Your Utility

Hometown Connections reviews industry changes and public power utilities response to the challenges presented. All levels of leaderships, to include governing boards, gain a strong appreciation for the critical role of effective governance in the face of these changes.

- Legislative and legal
- Technology
- Customer changes
- Expectations
- Demographics
- Workforce changes
- How public power utilities are responding to these changes
- The role of governing boards
- The need for community engagement
- The importance of Strategic Planning

Measuring & Sustaining the Value of Public Power

Hometown Connections reviews metrics and qualitative data to identify and share with stakeholders the value municipal utilities provide to their local community and customers.

- Why is it important to understand the value of your public utility?
- Approach to identifying and tracking metrics
- Qualitative data related to the value of public power
- Challenges and opportunities to collect the data
- Telling your story

Managing Risk

Hometown's consultants help public utilities apply risk management principles to maximize performance and productivity.

Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery

Responding to a business disruption or emergency can be stressful for any utility's organization and its customers. Putting a response plan in place before an event happens can save valuable time and help alleviate stress when team members know exactly what to do quickly. We can help you learn how to:

- Identify potential disruptions for your utility
- Identify function recovery priorities
- Build your recovery plan and procedures
- Determine roles and responsibilities for team members
- Build a communication plan in the event of a business disruption

Business Readiness Risk Assessment

A business readiness risk assessment can prepare you for what's ahead and help you assess your current business maturity in all areas of your operation. Whether you are in the aftermath of a business disruption or planning for future technology, you will want to understand the potential risks and gaps in your current business model. We can help you by:

- Performing an organizational risk assessment or function specific risk assessment to identify and help prioritize risks, gaps and opportunities.
- We can also provide the help you need to mitigate risks, streamline processes or redesign business practices in all areas of operations to include finance, customer service, support services, compliance, internal controls, project management, program management, training, safety, prioritization, strategic planning, governance, IT processes, information protection and safety, purchasing, vendor management, leadership, employee development and culture transformation.

Enterprise Risk Management

Enterprise risk management is integral and foundational to organizational strategy, financial stability, operational efficiency, business continuity, and business transformation. It is not a stand-alone activity and its function is core to the successful execution of business objectives and measurement of outcomes. How to manage risk can sometimes be confusing, but once an effective program is implemented, it can assist in prioritization and making efficient key business decisions. We can help you learn how:

- To understand the purpose of risk management, the benefits, and how to seamlessly integrate it into strategic planning, governance, and prioritization.
- To identify risks and assess their criticality, individually and collectively.
- To categorize, and rank risks within your organization.

- To respond to, monitor and report risks.
- To implement an Enterprise Risk Management Framework.
- To train your organization in the identification and mitigation of risks.

RP₃ Application Services

Hometown's expert helps utilities apply for designation by the American Public Power Association's Reliable Public Power Provider (RP₃) program. The program is based on best practices in four important disciplines:

- Reliability
- Safety
- Workforce Development
- System Improvement

Hometown Connections evaluates a utility's RP₃ readiness and reviews the application, sharing lessons learned, tips and insights to conduct a review of your distribution system and how to collect the data to successfully complete the RP₃ process and obtain such an important designation for your utility.

Customer Care

Hometown Connections gives governing officials and employees of community-owned utilities vital information on creating a culture of customer service excellence across the enterprise.

Strategies for Successful Customer Service Operations

Hometown Connections organizes its customer service consulting and education services around these core areas.

- What is good customer service?
- How to segment customers into categories and identify their specific requirements
- Changing demographics of utility workforce and customers
- Utility customer expectations – today and tomorrow
- The seven hallmarks of utility customer service
- Building customer service around your customers
- Operating with the customer's needs in mind when building policies and operations
- How to create a culture of customer service

Information Governance - How does this help drive the Customer Experience?

Identifying and finding the right information to provide the most efficient and effective customer service can be a challenge. Understanding how to protect customers privacy while using their information presents additional concerns. In today's digital world, providing the right information, at the right time, can set the tone for how customers feel about their experience with your organization.

Working on the front lines, you are the voice of the customer and have unique insight into what they need and how quickly. Hometown Connections will help you understand the key elements of an information governance program and learn how to:

- Assess your customer information maturity
- Identify and classify customer information for the best customer experience
- Understand the difference between information and data
- Protect customer privacy
- Work with information technology teams to build an Information Governance Program

Leadership & Employee Development

Leading from where you are is the focus of our development and enhancement programs. Whether you need one-on-one assistance at any level, or tools to bring teams together, we can help with non-positional leadership, emerging leaders, leadership enhancement, and executive leadership.

- Accountability and Personal Responsibility
- Communication Techniques
- Conflict and Negotiation
- Organizational Agility
- Team Building
- Relationship Building
- Teamwork
- Making Employees #1
- Individualism
- Mentoring
- Delegation
- Problem Solving

Staff Bios

We understand clearly that part of our mission is to support the growth and development of public power professionals and governing board members. Our management consultant subject matter experts continually explore ways to share insights, industry trends, and proven solutions with public power utilities across the nation. Some of our team members are highlighted below.

Staff	Biography
Tim Blodgett President & CEO Chief Executive Officer	Tim has held the positions of President and CEO of Hometown Connections since January 2001. He is responsible for HCI's overall efforts in delivering value to public power utilities. Tim has worked with many public power utilities in the area of governance and strategic consulting with an emphasis on continuous improvement and is a frequent guest speaker at industry forums.
Charise Swanson Vice President of Client Services	Charise joined the staff in 2020 and is a highly-recognized specialist in utility change management. She develops creative solutions to complex problems for utilities in areas such as leadership, strategy, operational effectiveness, customer service, and compliance. Her accomplishments include leading Smart City initiatives, and multi-million-dollar projects in advanced utility technologies and integrated business planning.
Steve VanderMeer Executive Consultant	Steve joined Hometown Connections in 1998 and provides consulting, facilitation and training services to public power utilities in strategic planning, governance and customer service. During his time with Hometown, he has worked with several hundred public power utilities on a wide variety of issues.
Phyllis Currie Executive Consultant	Phyllis joined HCI consulting team in August 2015. Previously, she was the General Manager of Pasadena Water and Power (PWP), in California. Under her leadership, PWP added new electric generation units to its power plant, added a water treatment plant, embarked on multi-year infrastructure improvement programs to upgrade the city's water and electrical distribution systems, and developed aggressive goals for renewable energy and water conservation.
William Acee Executive Consultant	Bill Acee joined the HCI consulting team in 2019. Since 1990, Bill has been committed to local government in the Village of Sherburne NY and has been closely involved with public power at the local, state and national levels. He has served the village for thirty years and has been integrally involved all aspects of the village's utility operations.
Paul Allen Executive Consultant	Paul joined the HCI consulting team in 2012. He is the Reliable Public Power Provider (RP ₃) Coach for Hometown Connections. Retired from the Nashville Electric Service as Vice President, Operations (Engineering), he was a member of American Public Power Association's RP ₃ Panel from 2005 through 2012 and served as chairman from 2009 to 2012.
Susan Ryba Executive Marketing Consultant	Susan has managed Hometown's marketing and communication efforts since 1998, promoting the company's broad range of utility consulting, technology, and management solutions. She supports Hometown's clients with the writing, design, layout, and promotion of their strategic plans.