

# Water Utility Climate Alliance Strategic Plan 2022-2026



WUCA  
Water Utility Climate Alliance

## Introduction

Climate change is here and its impacts will only worsen in the years to come. As a leading voice in the climate adaptation community, the Water Utility Climate Alliance (WUCA) is well-positioned to prepare the water sector for an uncertain, warmer future. The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan (Plan)—an update of the [2017-2021 Strategic Plan](#) will guide WUCA’s work over the next five years to address the many challenges ahead.

The updated Plan largely builds upon the previous one, maintaining both the mission and the overall priorities. Using a consensus-based approach members agreed that WUCA’s mission should remain unchanged based on its strengths and reputation in climate adaptation, but the vision should be revised slightly to more clearly express how climate resilient utilities support thriving communities. WUCA also identified a need to invest in key partnerships on national policy issues, help utilities incorporate emerging issues of equity in their climate work, and emphasize the importance of reducing greenhouse gases – also known as climate mitigation – as a key adaptation strategy and an issue of climate leadership in the water sector. The objectives were updated, in part to inspire new work to align with the opportunities mentioned above, and because WUCA successfully addressed the majority of objectives in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.

The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan was developed through a collaborative process, led by the direction of Erica Brown of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) and Kavita Heyn, current WUCA Vice-Chair, of the Portland Water Bureau. The plan’s content was developed with assistance by a WUCA staff Strategic Planning Committee that represented nearly half of WUCA utilities. The committee was the sounding board that worked to ensure the key takeaways from internal blue-sky discussions and interviews with key external partners were represented in the Strategic Plan update. The plan was reviewed, fine-tuned, and approved by staff during the 2021 spring WUCA Staff Meeting

WUCA’s Strategic Plan update for 2022-2026 puts the Alliance in a strong position to build on a legacy of leadership in water sector climate adaptation and address and respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. It outlines strategic priorities, goals, and objectives that WUCA will pursue over the next five years, presents a refined vision, and articulates its approach to collaboration and intended target audiences.



*The 12 WUCA utility members that collectively serve over 50 million people. Two utilities were added during the implementation of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan (Austin Water and the Philadelphia Water Department)*

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## **Mission**

*Collaboratively advancing water utility climate change adaptation.*

## **Vision**

*Climate-resilient water utilities supporting thriving communities.*

## **Vision Descriptor**

*Climate-resilient water utilities are an essential part of strong communities. WUCA strives to advance water utility climate adaptation so that communities can thrive in a changing world.*

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## **Goals and Objectives**

**INNOVATE AND LEAD: Leverage our collective experiences to develop leading practices in climate change adaptation and mitigation that are actionable, equitable, and serve as a model for others.**

1. Leverage memberships (e.g., AMWA, WUWC) to influence national policy and funding for climate change adaptation, mitigation, and related infrastructure investments.
2. Build strategic partnerships with and convene professional associations, research organizations and foundations to innovate, address emerging issues and amplify WUCA's voice in climate action.
3. Incorporate consideration of equity into all WUCA's work.

**MAINSTREAM AND OPERATIONALIZE: Integrate climate change adaptation into a range of water utility services, including planning, design, operations, and management.**

1. Continue to develop practical examples and case studies of climate adaptation and climate mitigation.

2. Facilitate continuous peer to peer learning on mainstreaming practices with other WUCAs and the WUCA network.
3. Promote the use of climate information and WUCA leading practices within member utilities' decisions, operations, and business practices.

**KNOWLEDGE GENERATION: Advance the practice of climate change adaptation and co-produce decision-relevant climate science for the water sector.**

1. Shape emerging research in climate adaptation and mitigation by collaborating with experts in the research community to convene forums and workshops and contribute to ongoing research efforts.
2. Monitor, review, and participate in national, regional, and other scientific climate assessments of relevance to WUCA's mission and vision.
3. Develop, test, and evaluate new techniques, approaches, mainstreaming practices and adaptation strategies that water utilities can implement.
4. Leverage WUCA knowledge and experiences to respond to emergent climate-related challenges.

**KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: Ensure that WUCA's knowledge and products are shared with and can be utilized by the greater water sector and adaptation communities.**

1. Develop, implement, and maintain an approach to disseminate WUCA knowledge and products.
2. Continue to develop and convene virtual and in-person trainings to transfer knowledge and products to external partners.

**SUSTAIN THE COALITION: Strengthen and maintain an effective alliance.**

1. Maintain administrative support and strategic expertise with an external contractor for WUCA leadership support and alliance coordination.
2. Proactively pursue external funding opportunities for WUCA projects and priorities.
3. Support effective working relationships between WUCA staff by facilitating creative opportunities for both virtual and in-person interactions.
4. Keep WUCA general managers and utility senior leadership regularly apprised of key coalition milestones and successes.