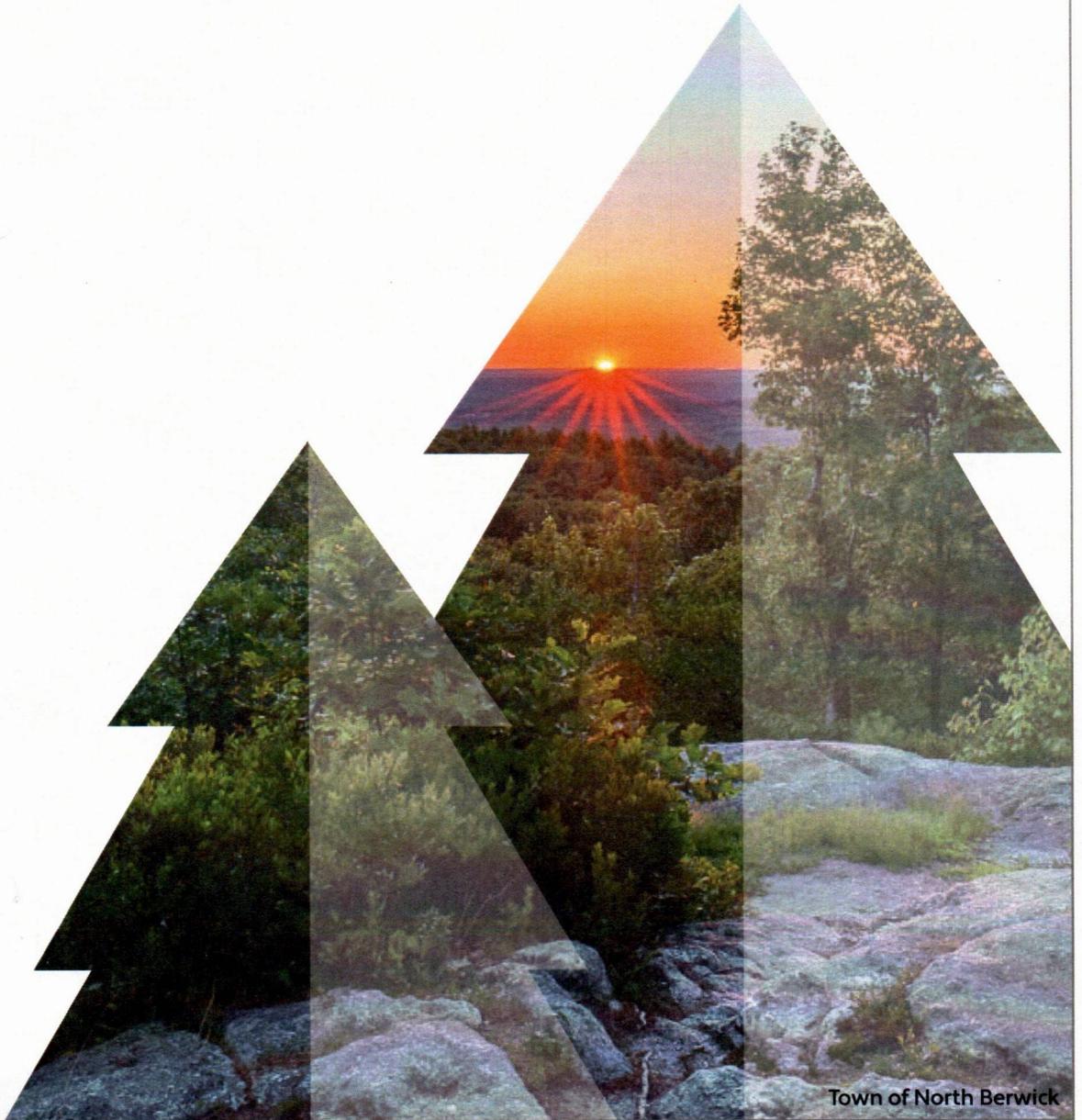




2026

# STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION



Town of North Berwick

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## 2026 FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Each year, the MMA Executive Committee convenes in the association president's community for a two-day retreat. This annual tradition offers an important opportunity to reflect on the past year's accomplishments and to set strategic goals for the year ahead.

In 2025, the retreat was held in Bradley, where MMA President Melissa Doane serves as town manager. The results of that meeting are summarized in the Strategic Business Plan, which outlines the association's priorities and initiatives in the coming year, while also highlighting the progress made and the accomplishments of the previous year.

**2025 Review.** Our priorities for 2025 were shaped by the results of the 2024 Member Engagement Survey. Guided by that feedback, the Executive Committee set ambitious goals that led to expanded educational opportunities, stronger communications, and increased investment in leadership development.

Additional highlights from the year included an increase in training sessions offered in either hybrid or virtual formats, a new partnership with NLC-RISC to provide civility-focused resources to our members, and the launch of updated health plans, as well as the introduction of new Wellness Works tools and enhanced outreach to our smaller communities.

MMA Risk Management Services (RMS) also made significant strides by adding terrorism and sabotage coverage—at no additional cost—to members of the Property and Casualty Pool, enhanced leadership offerings through NeoGov, and issued real-time monthly updates through the publication of the RMS Express newsletter.

Modernization of MMA systems was another theme of 2025. MMA upgraded digital tools, launched new affiliate websites, piloted improvements to web search functionality, and began developing analytics dashboards to better understand member needs and how they access MMA resources.

**Looking Ahead to 2026.** In 2026, MMA will make several key investments, including improving our financial system. The focus will be on creating a comprehensive one-stop platform that responds to the diverse needs of our members by meeting town and city leaders, municipal employees, and volunteers "where they are." This will include:

- Expanding **ServeStrong** outreach to ensure that our first responders can access critical behavioral health services.
- **Evaluating a Learning Management System to modernize training delivery and tracking so that all municipal members can easily access training information.**
- Expanding representation of the Strategic and Finance Committee, which serves in a budget committee capacity, to include new municipal voices in the process.
- **Providing municipal leaders access to civility programming and resources by working with NLC-RISC.**
- Promoting educational programs that support career growth in municipal leadership by strengthening MMA's partnership with the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA).
- **Implementing, assessing and refining our new communications hub, CommUnity, to unify communications and centralize informational resources in one convenient location.**
- Expanding web-based access to "how to" guides and tools for day-to-day operations.

It has been a productive year, but as you will read in the following pages, additional improvements and initiatives are on the horizon.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the association and our shared mission. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient future for municipal government in Maine.

## 2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The annual strategic planning process serves as an opportunity to evaluate the association's progress on the goals set in the previous year and to assess achievements and ongoing challenges. The goals established for 2025 included strengthening member communications, improving website navigation, expanding MMA's database capabilities, exploring online training options, reviewing member representation on governing boards, and promoting civility in public discourse. While continued progress is needed in the areas of member communications, website usability and online training, meaningful gains were made throughout the year.

In 2025, MMA implemented three core goals.

### PROMOTING CIVILITY.

In January 2025, MMA's Risk Management Services joined the NLC-RISC's Civility Collaboration Working Group. The group is tasked with developing resources and learning opportunities to help members address incivility through practices that promote well-being, foster positive interaction, and reduce the financial risks associated with absenteeism, decreased productivity, and increased staff turnover. The working group met in May and July to examine how a lack of civility can adversely impact occupational health and safety, and how managing contentious interactions can help mitigate liability risks. As the group continues its work, updates and resources will be shared with members.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION.

In February, the Executive Committee amended a governance policy to expand representation of the Strategic & Finance Committee (SFC). The amendment adds two municipal employees to the SFC who: (1) do not work in a member community currently represented on the Executive Committee; and (2) serve in a role other than the manager, administrator or elected municipal officer (e.g., selectboard member, councilor, mayor, etc.). This change is intended to broaden the range of municipal perspectives shaping the association's programs and services. MMA's officers, including the immediate past president, president and vice president, will meet in November to review applications and select two municipal employees to serve on the SFC beginning on January 1, 2026. Nominations details and the application form



are posted on the MMA website. The application deadline for the 2026 budget cycle was October 20, 2025.

### EXPANDING MMA DATABASE CAPACITY.

In 2025, MMA's IT Department implemented several key upgrades to improve the way members interact and do business with the association. While the full impact of these changes will be realized in 2026, this year's planning and groundwork paved the path for the smoother and more efficient delivery of services. Key improvements include:

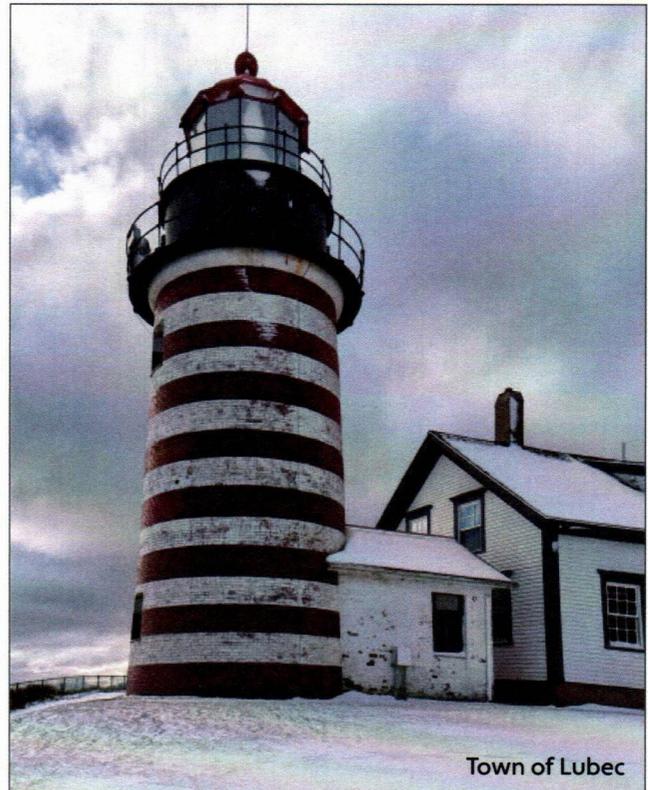
- 1. Internal Workflow Efficiencies.** Continuing to align departmental workflows to improve the member experience with streamlined membership database and roster updates, and new self-service tools launching in late 2026.
- 2. Enhanced Payment & Event Registration.** Upgrading processes for payments and registrations for meetings, workshops and conferences.
- 3. New Communication Platform.** Implementing the Personify **CommUnity** platform, which will replace some existing listservs and allow municipal officials and affiliate group members to connect and share information more effectively.

The IT staff also launched a Cyber Security Awareness Program, now available to members on MMA's website. In partnership with MMA's website editor, IT staff also migrated the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust website and began migrating affiliate group websites to MMA's internal platform. Of the eight interested affiliate groups, three websites have been completed, and the remaining five are expected to be migrated by the end of the year.

In addition to advancing the policy priorities outlined above, staff across the association continued to deliver programs and services tailored to the unique needs of Maine's elected and appointed municipal officials. The following provides an overview of key departmental achievements in 2025.

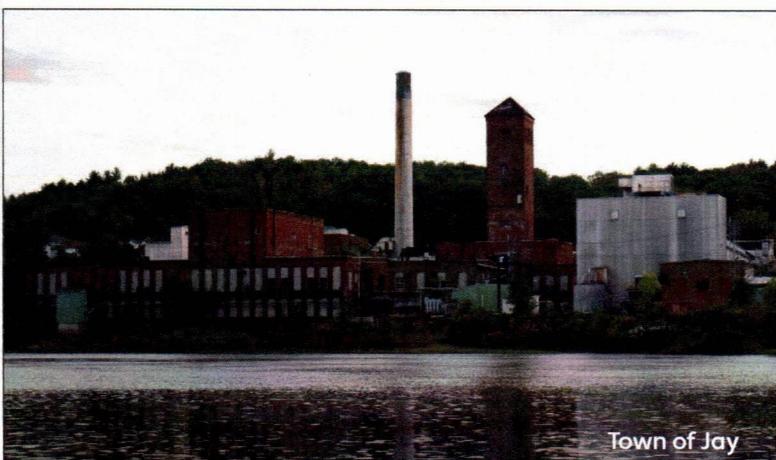
## Administrative, Financial & Information Technology Services

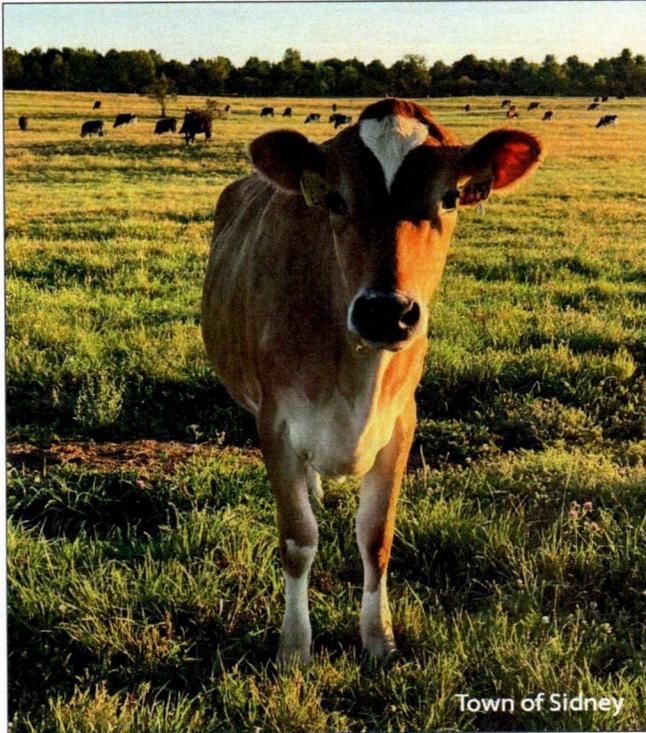
- Recruited and onboarded new directors in MMA's Finance and Human Resources Departments.
- Engaged consultants to support the implementation of municipal executive services and explored opportunities to expand consultant use for specialized services, particularly in financial management.
- Improved internal efficiencies by reorganizing the Central Services Department, resulting in the elimination of two positions through attrition.
- Upgraded ADP, the software used to manage internal payroll and personnel functions.
- Collaborated with Educational Services staff to restructure affiliate association agreements and fee structures to support the long-term sustainability of affiliate services.
- Replaced outdated and unsupported processes with modern best practices to manage MMA's investment portfolio more effectively.
- Researched, vetted, and selected a financial software program, and began evaluating the processes required for successful implementation.



## Advocacy & Communications

- Built and supported the transition of affiliate group websites to MMA's platform, empowering municipal officials to manage and maintain their own content.
- Cultivated new and existing relationships with vendors who support MMA's programs and services through advertising and event exhibition, generating \$273,000 to help offset member dues.
- Conducted the 2025-2026 Legislative Policy Committee election and supported the development of the association's two-year legislative platform, with a primary focus on delivering property tax relief to Maine homeowners.
- Tracked 894 of the 1,988 bills introduced during the first session of the 132nd Maine State Legislature and actively participated in 335 public hearings and work sessions at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee.
- Established a consistent podcast publishing schedule, covering a variety of legislative issues and other topics relevant to municipalities.





## Educational Services

- Planned and facilitated 32 workshops and conferences, with more than two-thirds of the sessions offered to increase accessibility.
- Introduced new educational sessions on conflict resolution, fostering belonging and psychological safety, and communication essentials.
- Organized and hosted the Municipal Technology and Human Resources conferences and the Annual Convention, all of which saw increased attendance.
- Coordinated and supported 72 workshops, eight conferences and 58 meetings for affiliate associations.
- Continued the “MMA for a Day” outreach event, with successful sessions held in Auburn and Greenville. A third event will be held in Biddeford later in the year.
- Launched a new six-session Lunch & Learn series focused on raising awareness of MMA services and introducing the staff behind key programs. The series attracted 75-100 members per session.
- Restructured affiliate association agreements and fee structures and implemented a new cost-sharing model to ensure the long-term sustainability of affiliate group services.

## Legal Services

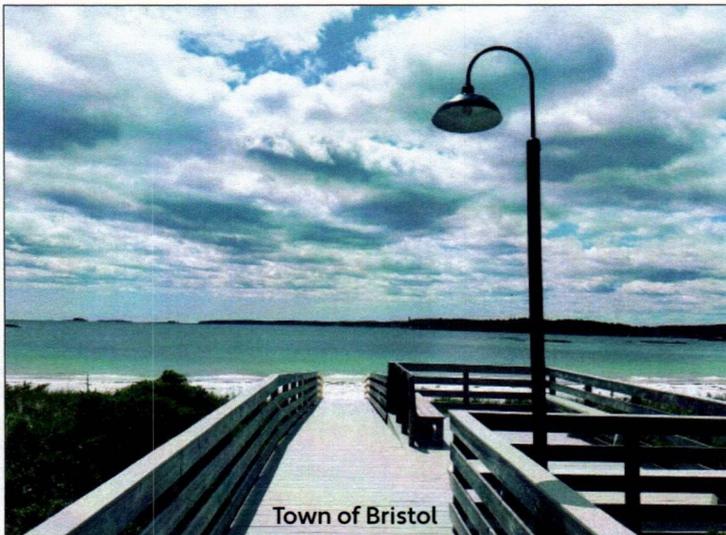
- Responded to 5,500 member inquiries.
- Maintained 15 searchable legal manuals, over 60 information packets, thousands of archived Legal Notes (with the most recent featured in the Maine Town & City magazine), and numerous legal guidance documents addressing current and emerging municipal issues.
- Issued updated editions of the Code Enforcement Officers Manual and Moderators Manual and a supplement to the Tax Collectors & Treasurers Manual.
- Updated more than 20 information packets.
- Developed new legal guidance documents on emerging issues, including affordable housing, sale of tax acquired property, and public comment periods.
- Participated in 25 MMA training events and workshops.
- Submitted an amicus brief in support of the Town of Somerville in Consolidated Communications v. Public Utilities Commission, Law Court Docket No. PUC-24-310.

## Personnel Services & Labor Relations

- Developed a one-stop Human Resources portal to provide easy access to essential resources, including job descriptions, sample employment offer letters, evaluation and reference check forms, required employment posters, and toolkits for the Federal Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Maine Paid Family & Medical Leave Act (PFMLA).
- Initiated planning for the development of an interim administrative staff pool (e.g., clerks, assessors) to help municipalities fill vacancies during the recruitment process.
- Supported municipalities by participating in labor relations and recruitment opportunities.
- Engaged with MMA staff to assess strengths and identify areas for improvement, helping to inform the department’s future HR goals and strategic planning.

## Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust (MMEHT)

- Implemented major changes to several of the Trust's health benefit plans, effective January 1, 2025, aimed at limiting cost increases, improving access to care and enhancing the long-term sustainability of benefits.
- Negotiated terms for a fully insured Medicare Advantage Program, including Part D prescription coverage, to provide retirees with access to affordable health care options.
- Worked with IT to expand the use of technology to improve service delivery, enhance data security, and increase operational efficiency.
- Assisted in migrating the MMEHT website to MMA's platform and transitioned to the Personify system for member contact tracking, improving field staff data gathering collection and engagement efforts.
- Began providing employer access to the BenefitSolver administrative system, allowing for electronic access to monthly billing and related benefit information.
- Strengthened member outreach by increasing in-person visits between members and Trust management, wellness coordinators, and field staff.
- Expanded education and communication efforts to ensure the new MMEHT board members are well-informed and equipped to contribute to decisions shaping the Trust's future.



## Risk Management Services (RMS)

- Selected and finalized a contract with a software vendor to integrate policy, loss control, and claims functions, enhancing efficiency and data management among all RMS programs.
- Secured favorable reinsurance rates, enabling RMS to reduce costs, strengthen financial stability, offer competitive pricing, and support long-term sustainability.
- Welcomed 10 new members to the Property & Casualty Pool (PC), reflecting the success of targeted outreach and marketing efforts.
- Restructured staff roles to improve member support and maximize the use of NeoGov, a no-cost online education and training platform, available exclusively to members of the Worker's Compensation Fund (WC) and PC.
- Successfully closed all PC claims from December 2022 and negotiated favorable settlements in both WC and PC programs, resulting in cost savings and the avoidance of prolonged litigation.
- Completed a WC Medicare audit and provided staff training to ensure continued compliance with federal reporting requirements.
- Continued to exceed established WC performance benchmarks, as demonstrated in the Maine Workers' Compensation Board's compliance reports, underscoring strong operational performance and regulatory adherence.
- Increased annual funding for the Safety Enhancement Grant and Safety Scholarship programs, reinforcing MMA's commitment to promoting workplace safety and member engagement.

## GOALS & INITIATIVES

**Establishing Priorities.** During its two-day planning meeting each September, the Executive Committee meets to develop the association’s annual goals and initiatives. These discussions provide the framework for the work of the Strategic & Finance Committee, a subcommittee chaired by the vice president, which is tasked with developing MMA’s preliminary budget for the Executive Committee’s consideration, discussion, revision and eventual adoption.

**Guiding Principles.** Throughout the budget adoption process, the Executive Committee is guided by three core principles: (1) maintaining and enhancing MMA’s direct member services and relations; (2) strengthening and supporting effective municipal participation in the intergovernmental system; and (3) ensuring a sound, transparent organization, with financial, technological and operational capacity to meet both the current and future needs of the association’s members.

**Benchmarking.** In addition to supporting the legal, educational, training, advocacy, employee benefits, human resources and risk management services our members rely on, the budget serves as a roadmap for implementing MMA’s goals, fulfilling commitments to our members, and pursuing key opportunities. The Executive Committee’s priorities, reflected in the budget, also provide meaningful benchmarks for assessing the association’s performance in meeting the diverse needs of member towns, cities and plantations.

**2026 Strategic Goals.** MMA’s 2026 goals are guided by two key objectives.

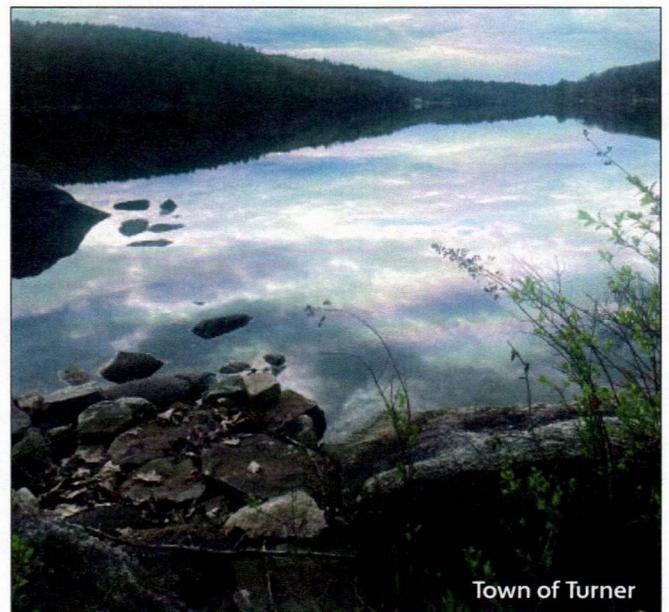
The first is to implement the changes necessary to better meet our members “where they are.” This includes introducing self-service tools, streamlining workshop and conference registration and billing processes, fostering partnerships and opportunities for collaboration, and evolving how member services are delivered.

The second objective is to generate the internal efficiencies necessary to reduce costs and the association’s reliance on member dues to provide valued programs and services.

While change can be difficult, MMA is embracing it as a necessary step toward better serving our members’ evolving needs.

### MEETING MEMBERS “WHERE THEY ARE”

- **Employing a Learning Management System.** The Executive Committee and staff recognize the need to implement a learning management system (LMS) to support the association’s ability to scale and diversify training offerings. LMS provides a centralized platform for accessing educational resources and enabling users to complete programs at their own pace and on their own schedules. This flexibility is especially valuable for municipal officials, elected officers and volunteers, and directly supports MMA’s mission to ensure equal access to educational opportunities.
- **Implementing Policy & Claims Systems.** With Risk Management Services’ current policy and claims system contract set to expire in 2027, the association has contracted with Klear.ai to implement a new, modernized system by September 1, 2026. This transition period presents a strategic opportunity to improve operational workflows and significantly enhance the member experience through improved technology. A key component of this initiative is the development of a member portal, designed to streamline policy and claims management, increase member engagement, enhance service efficiency and provide real-time access to critical insurance information.
- **Improving Member Outreach.** As MMA continues to improve communication avenues, focus will remain on improving member outreach and expanding the use of social media. To meet those goals, MMA will use the **CommUnity** plat-



Town of Turner

form to provide a centralized, user-friendly hub for news and updates. Additionally, staff will convene a communications steering committee, with representation across MMA departments, to evaluate current outreach efforts and develop a cohesive strategic plan.

- **Enhancing Website Navigation.** To enhance how members access information on MMA's website, staff will continue to work with department heads to reorganize website content for easier navigation. Efforts will include expanding the use of topic-specific portals (e.g., HR, cybersecurity) to serve as centralized information hubs, convening a group of municipal officials to participate in a website usability test to identify areas for improvement, and exploring self-service options and personalized member dashboards to offer faster, more customized access to resources.
- **Enhancing Health Trust Services & Security.** The Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust, in collaboration with IT staff, will continue to develop a technology-driven strategy aimed at strengthening member services, enhancing data security, and improving the delivery of services. In 2026, all member groups will be provided with access to the BenefitSolver administration system to retrieve their monthly Health Trust invoices and other resources electronically. The Trust will also expand its efforts to provide greater access to employee self-services tools, further improving the member experience.

## FOSTERING COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

- **Building Relationship with Regional Entities.** As the responsibilities assigned to municipal government grow in both number and complexity, town and city leaders are seeking partners for support in implementing state level priorities. The responsibilities, ranging from implementing housing-related mandates to General Assistance program administration changes, are placing growing pressures on local staff and budgets. With a continued overreliance on the property taxes to fund not only municipal services, but also schools, counties and state level priorities, collaboration has become essential to maximizing limited financial and human resources. By strengthening its relationships with councils of governments and other regional entities, which provide vital support in areas such as planning, transportation, emergency pre-



paredness, and regional cooperation, MMA will be able to more effectively assist municipalities across the state.

- **Strengthening Legislative Relationships.** To strengthen the state/municipal partnership, MMA will introduce new strategies for educating legislators about the roles and limitations of municipal government, while also developing programs and services to help municipal leaders better navigate the legislative process and effectively advocate for local policy priorities.

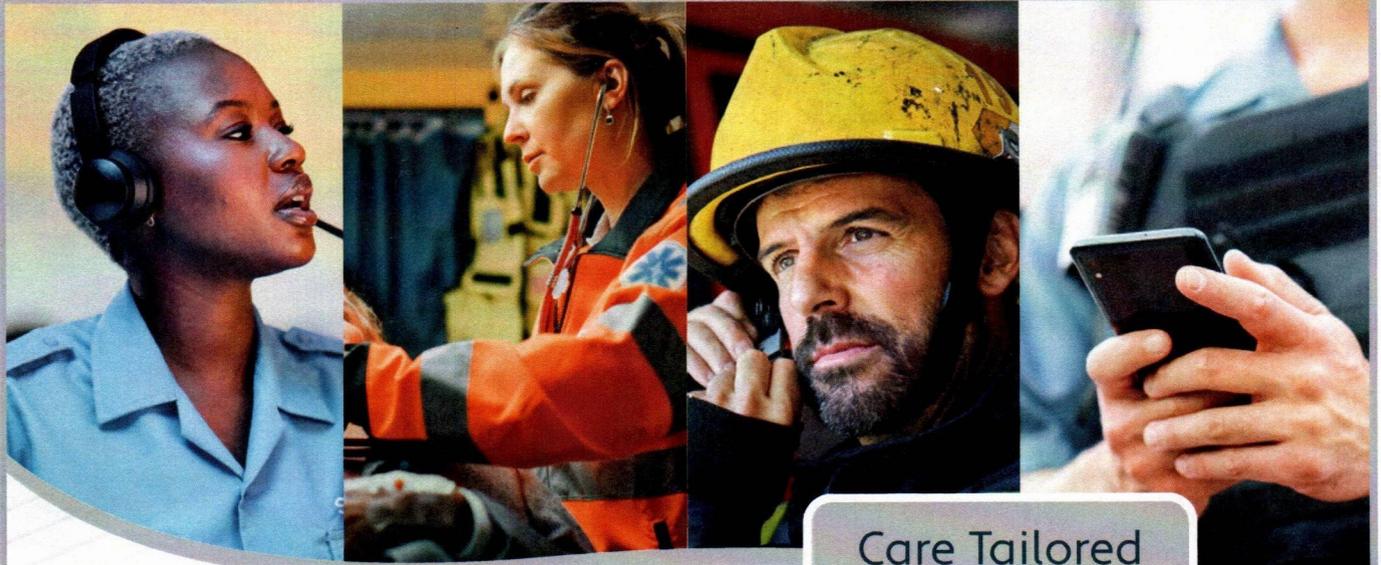
## REVIEWING EXISTING PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- **Legal Services.** With recent vacancies in the Legal Services Department and the opportunity to explore ways in which services are provided both internally and to our members, a subcommittee of the Executive Committee will explore potential restructuring options. The goal is to strengthen direct member services, while also supporting internal functions, including the Executive Office, training programs, and advocacy efforts.
- **Legislative Policy Committee.** With increasing use of hybrid meetings, some members of the Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) have raised concerns. While the remote option increases accessibility, especially for those who would otherwise face long travel distances, some fear the hybrid approach affects the quality of discussion on important legislative issues and limits opportunities to build strong relationships among peers. In response, the Executive Com-

mittee has opted to explore whether the LPC process needs to be restructured to meet current needs. If warranted, changes would be developed in collaboration with the current LPC and implemented in 2027.

## IMPLEMENTING AUTOMATION & EFFICIENCIES

- **Maximizing Member Self-Serve Functions and Interactions.** MMA utilizes a customer relationship management (CRM) system known as Personify, which MMA uses to track member information, engagement and training, and billing among other things. In 2026, MMA has plans to implement many of the software's member-facing services and ongoing enhancements to the platform's functionality. Upcoming features will include expanded member self-service options, such as on-line payments, access to invoices and order history, and the ability to update town and city rosters, as well as event management tools to streamline workshop and conference registrations, payments and refunds. MMA will also leverage the **CommUnity** platform to deliver a centralized, user-friendly hub for news and updates for both members and staff.
  - **Upgrading MMA's Financial Capabilities.** In 2025, the Executive Committee was informed of the need to upgrade MMA's financial system. The current platform relies heavily on manual processes, making it difficult to manage, increasing risk of human error, placing a significant burden on staff across all departments, and diverting focus from the association's member-focused mission. Ultimately, this solution will enable MMA to provide members with up-to-date financial information, including training, conference and convention registrations, and ensure that reimbursements are processed more quickly and accurately. At its September meeting, the Executive Committee supported a staff recommendation to implement Sage Intacct as MMA's primary financial management system. This modern solution is expected to improve accuracy and financial reporting by eliminating manual processes, establishing a centralized system built on best practices, and serving as a single source for both financial and statistical data. Sage will also enhance integration between finance and internal human resources
- functions, helping to formalize and streamline operations, improve workflows across Risk Management Services systems, and reduce the need for manual intervention. Staff will spend the remainder of 2025 preparing for the system conversion, with full implementation scheduled for 2026.
- **Modernizing Human Resources.** MMA will also prioritize the modernization of HR processes to better support both staff development and organizational needs. Key goals include enhancing policy compliance, increasing transparency, and building effective, streamlined systems that promote employee growth and operational effectiveness. A central component of this effort is the full implementation of the ADP system, which supports MMA's HR, payroll, and accounting functions. A key feature of this modernization effort is MMA's ability to conduct enhanced background checks for members and provide access to salary comparisons across municipal positions. This platform will automate vital processes such as recruitment, onboarding, benefits administration, performance evaluation, and terminations. Fully leveraging ADP's capacities will reduce manual workloads, improve efficiencies, and enhance visibility across HR functions, creating more consistent and equitable experiences for employees and supervisors. In addition, MMA will continue to promote staff engagement through expanded supervisor and employee development programs. By clearly defining expectations, roles and performance standards, the association aims to foster a workplace culture grounded in accountability, responsibility, and collaboration.
  - **Investing in Facilities Maintenance.** To preserve the longevity of MMA's building, equipment and infrastructure, and to ensure that projects are completed in a cost-effective manner, several key maintenance initiatives are planned for 2026. These include repairs and upgrades to walkways and the parking lot, performance assessments of fire suppression and security systems, targeted improvements to HVAC and elevator systems, and continued investment in routine maintenance to support the overall functionality and safety of the facility.



Care Tailored  
for the Unique  
Needs of First  
Responders

## Program Highlights:

- Dedicated Website
- Professional Mental Health Assessments
- Trauma-Based Telehealth Therapy
- Tailored, Trusted & Vetted Resources
- Preventative Telehealth Therapy
- 100% Confidential

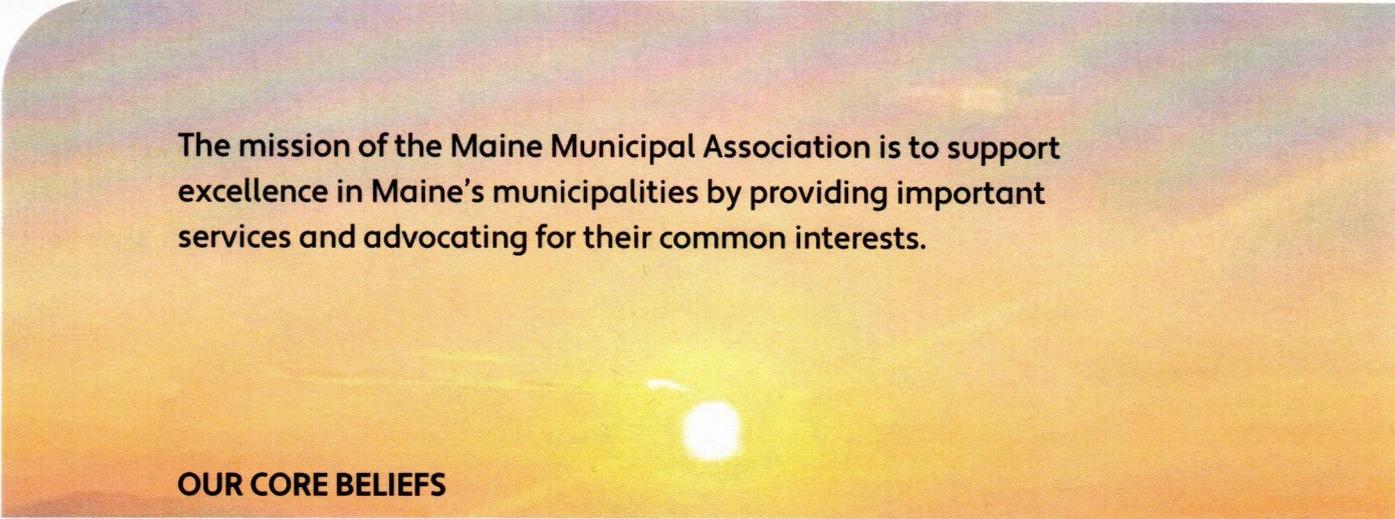
For more information, please visit:  
<https://servestrong.memun.org>

**SERVESTRONG**



MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

You're not alone—**SERVESTRONG** is here to help.



The mission of the Maine Municipal Association is to support excellence in Maine's municipalities by providing important services and advocating for their common interests.

## OUR CORE BELIEFS

**LOCAL GOVERNANCE** - We believe that local government is the foundation of a strong democracy and is fundamental to the provision of essential services that promote the safety, health and wellbeing of residents and communities.

**LEADERSHIP** - We believe in the accessibility and accountability of municipal officials, with a commitment to honesty, civility, integrity, and the highest ethical standards. Municipal officials are entrusted to develop cohesiveness and build strong future-driven communities.

**COLLABORATION** - We value and support opportunities for collaboration and partnerships among municipalities, public organizations, and private entities.

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION** - We respect the uniqueness of each municipality and the diversity within the community. We are dedicated to ensuring that all individuals are treated equally, respectfully, and fairly.

**FISCAL INTEGRITY** - We believe financial accountability, transparency, and responsible management of resources are essential for MMA and its member municipalities.

**EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE** - We believe in listening to and supporting member municipalities to ensure that their priorities, needs, and educational requirements are met through services and programs.

