

ENERGY Project contributing to positive changes at MEUW

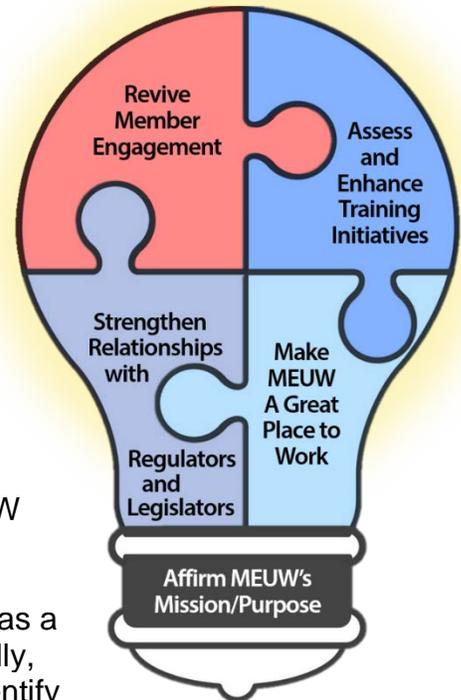
By Tim Heinrich, MEUW Executive Director

Henry Ford, the great American captain of industry, once said, “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.” As MEUW approaches the 90th anniversary of its founding, some might characterize the organization as “old.”

Through the ENERGY Project, which began early in 2018, MEUW has focused on learning – learning what its members need at a time of change in the electric-utility industry, learning what kind of association MEUW needs to become for its next 90 years, and learning how to be stronger and more effective in sharing the public power story with those who need to hear it. Indeed, even as MEUW turns 90, the association keeps learning – to stay “young.”

MEUW’s Board of Directors launched the ENERGY Project as a comprehensive assessment of the entire organization. Initially, the goals of the MEUW ENERGY Project were to clearly identify the services and activities to best serve and support members and to re-establish organizational stability. The ENERGY Project collected the “voice of the members” through a member-wide survey, three focus group sessions and a daylong “Future Search Summit” held in April in Wisconsin Dells. The result was a robust collection of feedback and ideas for helping MEUW to become a better association.

When I arrived in late April, the feedback from the ENERGY Project served as a launch pad to begin implementing improvements in the near term. MEUW Board President Paul Hermanson and I discussed those plans at the Annual Conference in La Crosse in May and outlined five key priorities. The table below identifies those priorities and some of the steps taken in recent months to learn from and build on the member feedback.



<p>Priority One: Affirm MEUW’s Purpose and Structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Executive Director has traveled across the state to shadow MEUW staff and visit member utilities to hear directly about the perceived value of MEUW ✓ Minor revisions to the association’s Mission Statement are being proposed and will be presented for Board consideration in September
<p>Priority Two: Revive Member Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Launched effort to update MEUW’s membership database, which has become out of date due to staff turnover; issues

	<p>with the database have resulted in incomplete mailing lists and missed communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evaluated member communications and began offering new content in <i>Live Lines</i> (including a Member Spotlight and a “Get to Know Your Wisconsin Official” column) ✓ Introduced <i>MEUW Weekly</i> as a new tool to streamline the number of e-mail communications from the MEUW Office ✓ Developed a “Calendar of Events” for the next 12 to 18 months to help members plan better for MEUW offerings
<p>Priority Three: Assess and Enhance Training Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Safety and Education Committee has taken the lead to evaluate all aspects of the Job Training and Safety (JT&S) program, including giving it a new name and hiring two experienced trainers ✓ The dates and topics for the 2019-20 “Management Training Program” have been set; program will move to Marshfield beginning next year based on member feedback ✓ Staff is evaluating new learning and development opportunities to address emerging topics on a more regular basis
<p>Priority Four: Strengthen Relationships with Regulators and Legislators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ General Managers from six utilities attended a forum with staff from the Public Service Commission to discuss Grid Modernization efforts ✓ Martin Day, Division Administrator for Energy Regulation, was a featured speaker at MEUW’s Annual Conference and highlighted the value of having municipal utilities work closely with PSC staff ✓ Issued an “Advocacy Action Alert” encouraging members to write letters to Senators Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson regarding proposed legislation impacting municipal utility charges for pole attachments ✓ City Utilities of Richland Center hosted 12 staffers from the PSC for a “Municipal Utility Field Day” to showcase for staff, including many newcomers, how municipal utilities operate; a similar event is planned for 2019 ✓ Funds are being raised for the Friends of Public Power political action committee to contribute funds to lawmaker’s campaigns that align with public power values and support our position on specific electric utility issues

<p>Priority Five: Make MEUW A Great Place to Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Executive Director shadowed staff to help strengthen team cohesion; staff participated in an in-service day at Rice Lake Utilities ✓ Minor changes to the Employee Handbook are being reviewed to help clarify some MEUW staff policies ✓ A more comprehensive performance assessment process is being developed and will be rolled out in early 2019
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These short-term accomplishments are just the beginning. In September, I expect to share plans with the MEUW Board of Directors for developing a new long-term strategic plan. “MEUW @ 100” will be a 10-year plan to envision what MEUW needs to be and should focus on achieving by 2028.

October 19 marks the date MEUW was established back in 1928. The association will celebrate the milestone with an external outreach effort to help promote public power and the value of the association.

The ENERGY Project is now in the implementation – or improvement – stage. We’re using member feedback to make changes to become a better association. We will continue to provide periodic updates about our progress. More importantly, though, we hope our members will start to see and experience the changes for themselves. We want MEUW to be a leader in helping its members to thrive in the changing utility landscape.

Henry Ford also said, “You can’t build a reputation on what you are going to do.” MEUW is embracing that philosophy by delivering value and driving results for its members. Thank you for your support and feedback along the way.