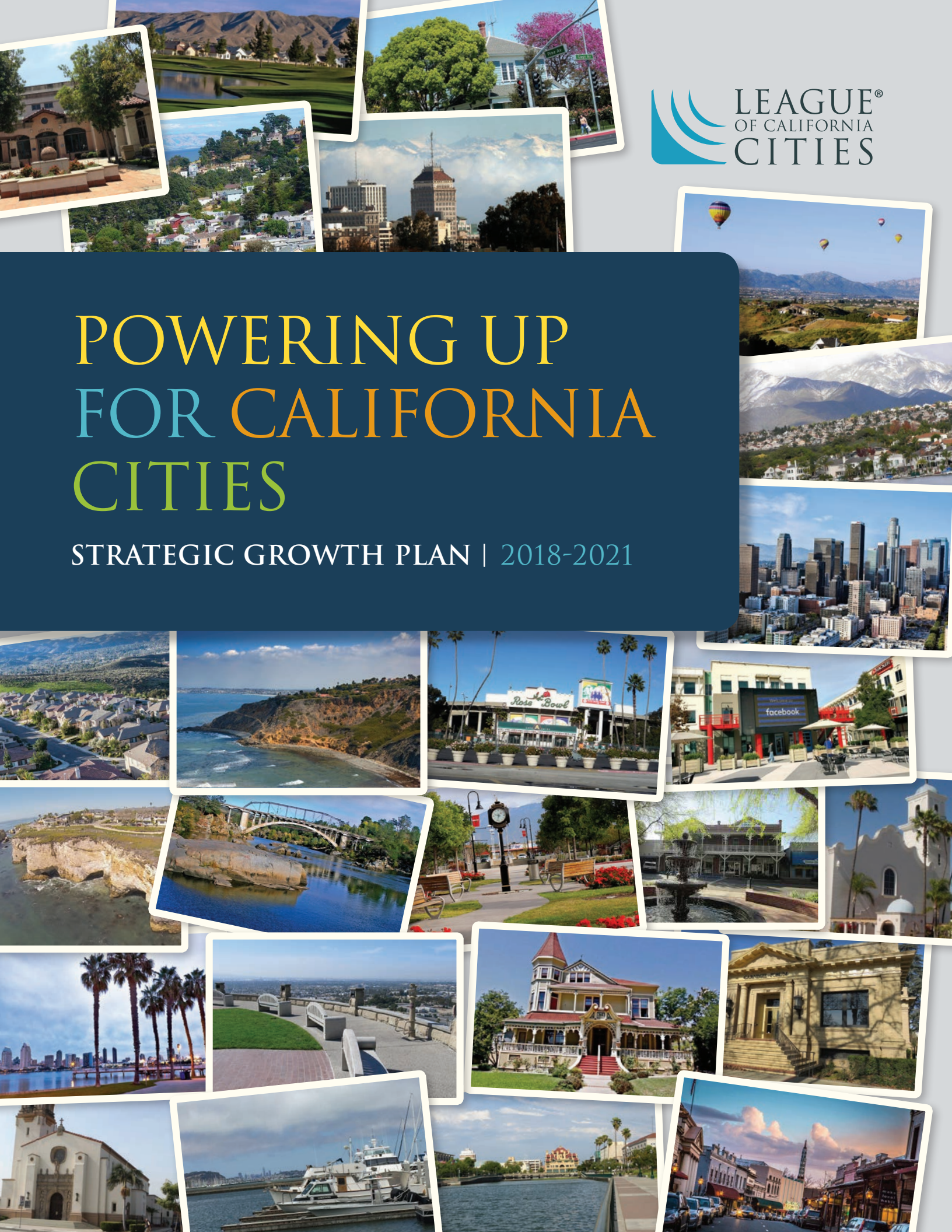


# POWERING UP FOR CALIFORNIA CITIES

STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN | 2018-2021







**T**HE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES holds a well-established and respected place as an advocate and resource for all municipal governments in the state. Membership is robust and stable and encompasses nearly the entirety of California’s population. The League maintains an ongoing presence with legislators and conducts a wide array of educational and training events for both elected officials and city staff.

**California is now the fifth largest economy in the world and is looked to as a leader in innovation.** Our state is also currently experiencing a time of unprecedented change along many dimensions that characterize today’s world; from rapidly emerging technologies, shifting demographics and rising environmental challenges to growing economic and social divides.

**In this environment, we believe that the need for strong cities is more critical than ever,** and the League has an important role to play. With focus and energy, we can help California cities lead the way in building resilient communities that are able to adapt and innovate, deliver high quality services to residents, and are served by effective and dedicated municipal governments.

## ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

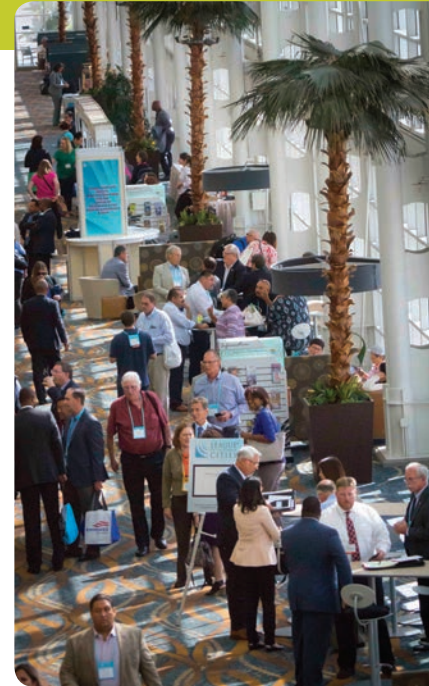
The League is keenly aware of the importance that strategic planning plays in our ability to fulfill our mission and address the challenges facing the municipalities we serve. We are committed to charting a course that will build on our current success, guide our growth, and take the impact and value we deliver to California’s cities to even greater levels.

This plan is the product of a comprehensive process that was led by a Strategic Planning Task Force composed of a diverse mix of League members and staff. It was structured and facilitated by 2B Communications, a consulting firm with extensive experience working with associations and nonprofits.

“ THE LEAGUE has built a track record of success in addressing issues and concerns impacting the full spectrum of California’s diverse cities. ”

### Key planning steps included:

- ▶ **Qualitative research:** In-person and phone interviews with League leaders, staff, conference sponsors and League Partners
- ▶ **Quantitative Research:** Three online surveys that expanded on the insights of the qualitative research and gathered actionable data from:
  - League staff
  - League Regional Public Affairs Managers
  - League members
- ▶ **Operational Review:** Membership structure, financial data and budget trends
- ▶ **Facilitated Planning Sessions:** In-person, collaborative planning meetings convened in February and April, 2018
- ▶ **Plan Refinement:** Feedback and refinement steps after each planning session



During the planning sessions, the Strategic Planning Task Force thoroughly reviewed and vetted the research findings and engaged in robust discussions about the core issues facing the League. The group came to a shared understanding of where the League is today, the environment in which we operate and our path to an even stronger future.

The outcome of the planning process was a set of six goals and strategies that will guide our actions and ensure progress in the years ahead. The final step was plan approval by the League’s board of directors on June 29, 2018.

## A PLAN THAT REFLECTS OUR CORE BELIEFS

The plan was designed to achieve relevance with our members by adhering to the League’s core beliefs.

### We believe:

- Local self-governance is the cornerstone of democracy.
- Our strength lies in the unity of our diverse communities of interest.
- In the involvement of all stakeholders in establishing goals and solving problems.
- In conducting the business of government with openness, transparency, respect and civility.
- The spirit of honest public service is what builds communities.
- Open decision-making that is of the highest ethical standards honors the public trust.
- The vitality of cities is dependent on their fiscal stability and local autonomy.
- The active participation of all city officials increases the League’s effectiveness.
- Partnerships and collaborations are essential elements of focused advocacy and lobbying.
- Ethical and well-informed city officials are essential for responsive, visionary leadership and effective and efficient city operations.



## THE LEAGUE TODAY

**A** SUCCESSFUL PLAN requires an accurate appraisal of the League's strengths, challenges and opportunities. We took a candid look at the areas where we are succeeding as well as challenges that must be addressed to ensure that we continue to grow our capacity to meet the evolving needs of the cities we serve and position ourselves to increase our impact. Findings from the research phase provided a multidimensional look at the League and served as context for the facilitated planning sessions.



### Key points include:

- ▶ **Our membership is strong and stable.** We enjoy a 98.5% market share spanning the full array of city sizes and settings. Inroads are being made to regain members who have lapsed. In the recent survey, members overwhelmingly consider the League to be a good value for the money.
- ▶ **Advocacy efforts are highly valued by members.** The League is viewed by a majority of members as their primary advocate with state policy makers, and their primary source of information on current legislation and policies that impact their city. Members also voiced strong support for the League to take an even more proactive stance in this arena.
- ▶ **We are a primary provider of high-quality networking events, training and education for elected officials.** Our educational offerings are viewed by elected officials as the primary source they turn to for training to become more effective city leaders and hone their essential leadership skills. Professional staff also view our offerings as valuable supplements to the training and networking they receive from other organizations related to their functional areas. Potential opportunities exist to expand online offerings and locally delivered training.
- ▶ **Our financial health is excellent.** The League has developed diversified revenue streams and operational reserves. With rare exceptions, individual conferences, workshops and other events operate in the black.
- ▶ **Staff is experienced and dedicated.** The majority of staff have been at the League for more than five years and also plan to stay for at least five more. Overwhelmingly, staff members enjoy positive working relationships with their supervisors and strongly agree that their work makes a positive difference. A number of opportunities were identified for increasing cross-departmental collaboration and promoting a culture of inclusion and diversity.



## THE LEAGUE TODAY *continued*

- ▶ **Communications with members are generally viewed as timely and satisfactory.** Nearly all members surveyed feel they receive the right amount of communications from the League, and those who had personal communications with staffers had very positive experiences. Two-thirds feel they are well-informed about the League’s offerings. California Cities Advocate e-newsletter and Western City magazine are most highly valued. There is room for growth in terms of a social media presence.
- ▶ **There is untapped potential for the League to play a more active role at the local level.** League members appreciate work by the League that brings local stakeholders together to work on solutions to community problems and would like to see growth in this area. In addition, the League’s division structure, staffed by Regional Public Affairs Managers, is seen as a good framework for establishing and maintaining productive local relationships. Bolstering resources in this area would help to ensure that cities are receiving consistent services from the League.
- ▶ **We have challenges in member engagement.** There is room for improvement in the area of member engagement. Just 38% of member survey respondents considered themselves to be “engaged” or “very engaged” with the League. This appears to be related to lack of awareness and personal outreach that introduces the League’s offerings to both newly elected and new city staffers. Also, those in larger cities feel comparatively more engaged than those in smaller cities, who may face additional participation challenges due to smaller staffs and limited travel resources.
- ▶ **Governance and leadership processes need to continue to evolve.** Although the League’s governance processes are generally viewed as effective, efforts are needed to streamline the pathway to leadership and be more transparent and inclusive. The caucuses, committees and sponsors also have the potential to become more impactful.



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## TOP CHALLENGES FACING CITIES TODAY

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Housing affordability                | 6. Public Safety/Criminal Justice Reform |
| 2. Pensions/OPEB                        | 7. Water Policy/Infrastructure           |
| 3. Homelessness                         | 8. Jobs                                  |
| 4. Transportation Policy/Infrastructure | 9. Climate Change/Adaptation             |
| 5. New Economic Tools                   | 10. Technology/Cyber Security            |

*Source: League of California Cities 2018 Member Survey*

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# ADVANCING OUR MISSION AND VISION

Our three-year Strategic Growth Plan has been designed to help the League fulfill our vision and mission:

**VISION:** *To be recognized and respected as the leading advocate for common interests of California's cities.*

**MISSION:** *To expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians.*

## WE'VE SET 6 KEY GOALS:



### ADVOCACY

Strengthen California cities through proactive advocacy on common priority issues.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Increase the capacity of city officials and staff in California to provide the highest level of service to their communities.

### ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Expand the League's organizational capacity to fulfill its mission and implement its strategic priorities.

### MEMBERSHIP

Maintain high relevance and facilitate meaningful member engagement.

### GOVERNANCE

Enhance the League's governance to achieve even higher levels of engagement and effectiveness.

### VISIBILITY

Raise the League's visibility as the preeminent voice for cities in California.

# HOW WE WILL GET THERE | The following strategies provide a road map for putting the plan into action.

The League's staff and volunteer leaders will share responsibility for implementing the plan. Each year, we will review and update the plan as needed, as well as identify implementation priorities and develop a scorecard to enable us to monitor and measure progress.



## GOALS

## KEY STRATEGIES

### ADVOCACY

Strengthen California cities through proactive advocacy on common priority issues.

- ▶ Mobilize more members in the League's advocacy efforts.
- ▶ Continue to develop collaborative relationships with Legislators.
- ▶ Align and leverage partnerships to proactively advance legislation on issues that are shared priorities for member cities.
- ▶ Ensure that the policy development and priority-setting process is thorough, member-informed and transparent.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Increase the capacity of city officials and staff in California to provide the highest level of service to their communities.

- ▶ Continue to grow, improve and differentiate the League's conferences.
- ▶ Develop new resources that provide members with up-to-date and useful comparatives and best practices.
- ▶ Expand in-person and online training offerings for elected and appointed officials that set the standard and encompass all stages and leadership roles (e.g., newly elected officials)

### MEMBERSHIP

Maintain high relevance and facilitate meaningful member engagement.

- ▶ Create new tools to enable personalized outreach to all new city officials and targeted staff and provide a "roadmap" for involvement.
- ▶ Evaluate the current regional division structure and processes and modify to consistently achieve strong and productive relationships with member cities.
- ▶ Develop a framework to ensure the League is well-informed of and connected to all members' needs.
- ▶ Implement a sustained communications program to assist City Managers with connecting to their elected and appointed officials with League resources and activities.

### VISIBILITY

Raise the League's visibility as the preeminent voice for cities in California.

- ▶ Ensure that the League conveys a strong and consistent brand to all audiences.
- ▶ Develop and implement a communications plan to elevate the voice of the League across all channels, including media, on priority issues for California cities.
- ▶ Increase communications to raise awareness for the League's advocacy priorities and activities.

### GOVERNANCE

Enhance the League's governance to achieve even higher levels of engagement and effectiveness.

- ▶ Strengthen relationships and enhance coordination with the League's Caucuses, Committees, Divisions and Departments.
- ▶ Create a diverse and robust leadership pipeline that will educate and encourage members to serve in leadership positions.
- ▶ Provide an orientation and leadership training to the League's Board, Policy Committee and other subunit members on their roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ Evaluate governance roles, structure and processes and modify, as needed.

### ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Expand the League's organizational capacity to fulfill its mission and implement its strategic priorities.

- ▶ Develop and implement an integrated data management and technology strategy to enable more targeted communications and services to League members.
- ▶ Continue to identify and provide cost-saving solutions to cities, e.g., U.S. Communities and the California Statewide Communities Development Authority.
- ▶ Assess the current League Partner program and make adjustments as needed to maximize its potential and add value to the League's mission.
- ▶ Identify ways to clarify and enhance the value derived from the relationship between the Institute for Local Government (ILG) and the League.
- ▶ Continue to attract and retain highly qualified staff, provide professional development and training, and facilitate a collaborative and healthy work environment.

THANK YOU TO OUR  
STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

Richard Garbarino, *South San Francisco Council Member*  
Jan Arbuckle, *Grass Valley Council Member*  
Randon Lane, *Murrieta Council Member*  
JoAnne Mounce, *Lodi Council Member*  
Carolyn Coleman, *League of California Cities Executive Director*  
Rachelle Arizmendi, *Sierra Madre Mayor*  
Michele Beal Bagneris, *Pasadena City Attorney*  
Randy Breault, *Brisbane Director of Public Works/City Engineer*  
Ross Chun, *Aliso Viejo Council Member*  
Anton "Tony" Dahlerbruch, *Palos Verdes Estates City Manager*  
Larry Forester, *Signal Hill Council Member*  
Kristine Guerrero, *League of California Cities Regional Public Affairs Manager*  
Randi Johl, *Temecula City Clerk*  
Kirsten Keith, *Menlo Park Mayor*  
Jim Lewis, *Pismo Beach City Manager*  
Polly Low, *Rosemead Mayor*  
Jorge Morales, *South Gate Council Member*  
Lydia Romero, *Lemon Grove City Manager*  
Ana-Maria Quintana, *Bell Vice Mayor*  
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