

MEMORANDUM

To: Yakima City Council Members
From: Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler
Subject: Association of Washington Cities Membership Benefits
Date: August 31st, 2023

Council Members,

During its recent budget study sessions, the City Council has discussed the City's membership in the Association of Washington Cities (AWC). Following is a brief summary of the benefits the City receives through its membership in the AWC and the costs associated with the City's AWC membership.

The AWC provides a wide array of services to its membership, which has consistently included **all** of the cities and towns (currently numbering 281) in Washington State. The AWC was originally founded during a conference in Yakima in 1933 which was held to develop a mechanism by which cities would share in revenues generated from state-permitted liquor sales.

AWC membership fees are determined by a per-capita calculation and vary slightly based on population categories established by the AWC Board of Directors. The City of Yakima's annual membership fee in 2023 is about \$75,000.

The AWC provides services in five core areas: 1) Technical Assistance; 2) Publications and Other Resources; 3) Educational Training; 4) Member Programs; and, 5) Legislative Advocacy.

The City of Yakima particularly relies on the technical assistance services provided by the AWC.

- City staff often rely on the AWC's staff of subject matter experts for advice and guidance on topics ranging from municipal finance to law and justice, telecommunications to public records.
- The AWC provides regular updates on currently available state and federal funding opportunities the City of Yakima can take advantage of.
- All City of Yakima job openings are posted free of charge on the AWC's JobNet webpage and are viewed by potential candidates nationwide.
- The AWC regularly offers insight into mechanisms and approaches being utilized by local government to address financial challenges.
- The State of the Cities ongoing research project explores the financial health of cities and towns statewide. Comprehensive State of the Cities reports are compiled by the AWC every four years and updates are published annually.
- The AWC regularly provides information which identifies key issues local government must consider in the rapidly-evolving public sector environment.

The AWC regularly publishes numerous fact sheets, reports, manuals, studies, etc. that the City of Yakima and other local government entities utilize as resource materials.

- The AWC's *Legislative Bulletin* is published weekly during legislative sessions and monthly during interims and provides City staff and elected officials with timely information about activities in Olympia and alerts staff and elected officials when critical input is needed on pending legislation.
- The AWC regularly creates resource materials that provide reliable data used by the City to develop well-reasoned and defensible policies and procedures.
- *CityVoice*, the AWC's weekly e-Newsletter, is used by City staff to stay informed about the evolving public sector landscape.
- *Cityvision* is the AWC's bi-monthly magazine and features relevant articles and information on emerging issues affecting cities and towns.
- The *Mayor & Council Handbook*, *53 Suggestions for Successful Public Service*, *The Elected Officials' Road Map*, *So You Want to Be an Elected Official*, and *We Call*

This Meeting to Order are a few examples of AWC publications designed to provide elected officials with valuable information about governing.

The AWC provides comprehensive training and educational opportunities to its members covering a variety of topics ranging from the highly technical (public sector resource management, quasi-judicial land use decision making, comprehensive loss control, etc.) to basic governance principles (effective local leadership, parliamentary procedure, roles and responsibilities of elected officials, etc.).

- Each year the AWC conducts its Labor Relations Institute (LRI) in Yakima, which City staff consistently attends. The LRI provides guidance regarding the many unique aspects and evolving nature of public sector employment law. The LRI is regularly attended by more than 450 people who spend money on hotel rooms, food, entertainment, and other associated activities.
- The AWC's Annual Conference, which is regularly attended by City staff and elected officials, provides the most up-to-date information about topical issues affecting cities and towns in Washington State and provides meaningful opportunities to learn from the experience of others.
- The AWC's City Action Days takes place during state legislative sessions and provides local elected and appointed officials with training and valuable information about navigating Olympia.
- The AWC maintains an expansive eLearning library that provides on-demand training on a variety of issues affecting the operation of municipal government.
- Through its Certificate of Municipal Leadership Program, the AWC equips local elected officials with the skills they need to effectively operate within the law, plan for the future, secure and manage funds appropriately, and foster positive staff and community relationships.

Many more training and educational programs, offered both in person and online, are provided by AWC trainers throughout the year and are regularly attended by City staff.

Through member programs such as its Employee Benefits Trust, Risk Management Services Agency, Drug and Alcohol Consortium, Workers' Compensation Retrospective Ratings Program and others, the AWC augments and enhances services provided by individual entities.

- The AWC is a founding member of the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance ("USCGPA"). As a member of the AWC, the City's purchasing power is enhanced through AWC's agreement with the USCGPA.
- City staff regularly attend the AWC's annual Healthy Worksite Summit and Wellness Networking Forums to formulate strategies to reduce healthcare costs.
- The City of Yakima is a multi-time winner of the AWC's WellCity Award, which recognizes excellence and best practices by local government in the promotion of employee health.
- The City has won multiple AWC Municipal Excellence Awards, including in 2008 for its Downtown Yakima Futures Initiative and in 2013 for opening its miCare in-house employee healthcare clinic.

The AWC's legislative advocacy efforts primarily focus on the interests of cities and towns in Washington State as a whole, rather than on positions adopted by individual entities regarding specific pieces of legislation.

- The City's Olympia lobbyists work hand-in-hand with AWC staff to advance the City's specific legislative agenda and to promote the priorities established by the Yakima City Council.
- The City's Olympia lobbyists regularly attends meetings convened by the largest cities in the state to discuss legislative issues of high importance to them and attend weekly meetings with AWC lobbyists during legislative sessions to coordinate efforts.
- The AWC Legislative Committee, which consists of representatives from the smallest towns to the largest cities in the state, drafts broad legislative priorities

each year through a multi-month process. Ultimately, the AWC Board of Directors adopts a set of priorities.

The City of Yakima's membership in the AWC provides it with ready access to training, data, analysis, etc. concerning a wide variety of local governance issues crucial to operating a municipal corporation. The legislative advocacy, educational training, publications and other resources, technical assistance, and member programs provided by the AWC combine to give the City of Yakima and the 280 other cities and towns in Washington State tools, information, and knowledge necessary to deliver services to citizens as efficiently and effectively as possible.