

Effective Utility Management

The premise of effective utility management is that water providers – utilities and companies alike – need tools to help them address and face the increasingly complex challenges relates to rising costs and workforce issues, and the need to focus on delivering a safe, dependable product and services while sustaining community support. For this reason, effective utility management is considered the basis of future water utility sector management.

Effective utility management (EUM) relies on the “Ten attributes of effectively managed water sector utilities.” These attributes, listed below, provide a succinct definition of the focus of well-performing utilities, and what it is that they are trying to achieve. These attributes, therefore, should be considered and accepted as the basis for improving management within any operating water utility. The attributes can be viewed as a set of building blocks for management improvement opportunities. They are listed below in no particular order, since organizational managers will determine their relevance and relative importance based on individual circumstances.

- Product quality
- Customer satisfaction
- Employee and leadership development
- Operational optimization
- Financial viability
- Infrastructure stability
- Operational resiliency
- Community stability
- Water resource availability
- Stakeholder understanding and support

All of these components influence how a water organization must conduct its business, and therefore are important to track and assess over time, as conditions change and needs arise.

Tools are available to help water organizations access their current situation and make improvements to address needs and priorities. The District also has resources that may be made available to local water companies and utilities to support planning and implementation of a EUM program.

Critical to the success of any EUM is the interest of the utility decision makers to engage in a meaningful assessment of actual conditions and challenges facing the organization; and a realistic assessment of those tools and actions that the utility can implement to address the future needs or the organization. Linking cash flow and infrastructure management is clearly the most vital task; however, solving future management challenges will require the utility to leverage many of the BMPs listed in this tool box, to effectively balance the management of water supply with expected water demands while structuring water rates at levels that are sustainable and reasonable to meet the needs of the community. It is expected that future costs related to maintaining a safe, sustainable, reliable water supply will be increasing substantially in the future, and it is the responsibility of the utility to implement programs that support the long-term needs of its customers, including those programs that may be unpopular but are vital to the well being of the community.

Resources

[US EPA Primer on EUM](#)

[American Water Works Association Technical Resources on EUM](#)

[Water Effective Utility Management Website](#)

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