



**Blueprint 2.0**  
DC Water's 2022-2027  
Strategic Plan





## Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us how global and interdependent we have become as humans. A virus that began on the other side of the world spread like wildfire and completely upended life as we knew it before March of 2020. It has taken incredible international cooperation and coordination to contain this deadly threat, a shared effort necessary for our mutual survival.

Likewise, we must think globally in how we plan to meet the challenges of tomorrow. As a water and wastewater utility, we don't operate in a vacuum. We are influenced by forces beyond our control including climate change, natural disasters, and yes, public health crises like a pandemic. At the same time, we have the responsibility to ensure we operate in ways that do good rather than harm the environment or the people we serve.

That's why I am so proud that to develop this strategic plan, DC Water started with the inspiring United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. That gives us the foundation on which to build a better, more sustainable, more resilient, more reliable and more equitable organization over the next five years.

It is my pleasure and privilege to lead the DC Water Board of Directors on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser. I have worked closely with the Mayor to develop her Sustainable DC Plan and I know this plan, Blueprint 2.0, will support her vision to make the District of Columbia the healthiest, greenest, most livable city for all District residents.



**Tommy Wells**  
Chair of the Board of Directors

It has been three years since we launched The Blueprint, the strategic plan that pushed us to operate as a high-performing utility, improve employee engagement and the customer experience, better leverage technology, ensure a safe workplace, and enhance our readiness and resilience.

Along the way we have become a more results-driven organization and today we can better measure the progress made to meet those goals. We can look at each strategic program and highlight successes and real, impactful change implemented at DC Water since 2018. We can also point to a shift in the culture of the organization as we have embraced the values of Accountability, Trust, Teamwork, Safety, Customer Focus and Wellbeing.

Now, the challenge before us is to build on that progress and set an ambitious course for the next five years and beyond. This organization has a hard-earned reputation for leadership and innovation, and in my opinion this plan, Blueprint 2.0, will accentuate our standing in the water and wastewater industry, ensure we continue to deliver unparalleled water services to our community and position the organization to address the needs of the future.

The Board of Directors and Management Team worked in partnership to identify the key imperatives to move this organization forward in the face of local and global trends and drivers of change such that we never thought possible. Extensive engagement gave everyone in leadership the opportunity to leave their fingerprint on this document and shape the strategic direction of DC Water.

The result is a clear view of where this organization is headed and the path forward to achieve the next level of performance and service, to the great benefit of our customers.



**David L. Gadis**  
Chief Executive Officer  
and General Manager

# Introduction

## Our Vision and Mission

Our Vision at DC Water is to aspire to be known for superior service, ingenuity and stewardship to advance the health and well-being of our diverse workforce and communities. Our mission and primary objective to achieve our vision is to exceed expectations by providing high quality water services in a safe, environmentally friendly, and efficient manner.

We provide around 700,000 residents and 21.3 million annual visitors in the District of Columbia with essential water, wastewater, and stormwater services. We serve an area of approximately 725 square miles and treat wastewater for approximately 1.6 million people in neighboring jurisdictions, including Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland and Fairfax and Loudoun counties in Virginia. Our values of **accountability, trust, teamwork, customer focus, safety and wellbeing** guide our decision-making and are a reflection of our culture enabling us to deliver a vision and mission for these communities we serve.



## The Blueprint

Our current strategic plan, **The Blueprint**, has demonstrated the commitment of our Board of Directors, management team and workforce to meet our challenges head on and position DC Water for success in the coming years.

The Blueprint has DC Water headed in the right direction. Since the launch of The Blueprint, we have concentrated resources and energy to achieve the goals outlined in our strategic plan. Highlights of these accomplishments include providing support to thousands of customers through our Customer Assistance Programs, improving our safety culture by reducing our Lost Time Incident Rate, redesigning Leading Blue – our in-house training program to continue in a virtual format, and delivering over 40 in-house training classes. We also embarked on digital transformation by migrating our systems to the cloud environment which has significantly enhanced our ability to pivot seamlessly to teleworking during COVID-19. We deployed predictive models for water quality, water main breaks, revenue and receipts tracking and meter monitoring.

We also created a new Water Quality tracking mobile app to interface with captured data. These combined accomplishments have enabled DC water to continue to deliver a high-quality service and maintain our critical infrastructure.

This is a critical time for our organization. We must build on the efforts and progress made through The Blueprint to ensure we maintain and improve the vital services for our customers. In order to achieve this, we need to manage future uncertainty and adapt to changes that will impact on our activities. We must ensure that this critical infrastructure – which has served us so well and sustained this great city since the mid-1800's – can continue to do its job for the next 150 years. We need to harness our operational excellence and innovative culture that have made us an industry leader to tackle the 21st century challenges before us, including aging pipes that have outlasted their useful lives and capital costs that are driving rate increases. Since May 2018, CEO David Gadis has been working to put together the best leadership team in the industry and now is the time for a refreshed strategy to tackle the new challenges of today and future challenges of tomorrow.

# Challenges

## Addressing the challenges of today

COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges to DC Water and more broadly, to the water utility industry and the communities we collectively serve. Our employees have met these challenges head-on and they did so without sacrificing progress on numerous critical initiatives for the Authority, our customers, and our community. We need to continue to identify key opportunities for DC Water to become more resilient to future shocks and how operations can be re-shaped to better serve our communities as we slowly return to a new 'business-as-usual.'

DC Water is faced with the continuous challenge of balancing customer affordability and financial stability. With businesses and schools shuttered during the pandemic, the Authority saw a sharp decline in commercial and municipal consumption, offset only slightly by a small increase in the amount of water District residents were using at home. We are still on strong footing financially, but revenue is down, and the impacts may linger as the District and customers recover from the economic toll of COVID-19. Over the next five years we need to continue to ensure we are delivering maximum value for our customers in the most equitable manner.

Maintaining essential services across our aging asset base is a critical challenge we currently face. Our world class Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant is renowned for superior service, but out in the streets, many components of our water distribution and sewer collection system are older than their expected lifespan.

The current pace of replacement is insufficient and needs to be addressed. Given our current cost recovery business model we need to consider new approaches to address these challenges while also maintaining equitable and affordable rates.

We are also anticipating new regulation and need for enhanced watershed coordination with key stakeholders, including the need to continue removing lead completely from our system. To remain compliant, this could cost as much as \$1 billion and is a critical challenge for DC Water and the District.

The pandemic and recent events have presented real challenges as we set out to engage with customers about our priorities and proposed rates for future fiscal years. To be able to address these we need to leverage advancements in technology to optimize our existing assets, collaborate with customers and continue to empower our staff.

Blueprint 2.0 is our new enterprise-wide strategic plan designed to guide us over the next five years and beyond. This strategic plan will allow DC Water to address immediate challenges by focusing on stronger alignment between our strategic priorities and financial budgets, stronger integration and alignment between our goals and core activities and a strong focus on high performance outcomes.

## Realizing the opportunity and tackling the challenges of tomorrow

There are many trends and drivers that will influence the future context in which we will operate over the next three decades. The trends considered to be most impactful for DC Water are diverse and include global, national and local drivers of change. For example, DC Water has a critical role to play with the United States rejoining the Paris Agreement and President Biden pledging to make the fight against climate change a top priority of his administration. These trends that are forecasted to significantly impact DC Water in the long term include climate change and global warming, the transition to net-zero emissions, changing regulatory and political landscapes and declining water consumption.

By undertaking long term, strategic horizon scanning and aligning our thinking to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals we have pushed Blueprint 2.0 to identify and consider drivers of change and contextual matters which are applicable to our mission and by virtue of their nature, have implications to our customers, employees, operations, the environment, and the wider community.

Blueprint 2.0 frames our transformational ambition to accelerate the initiatives we began addressing within The Blueprint to address these critical long-term drivers of change. The cross section of our people who contributed to Blueprint 2.0 echoed the importance that we, DC Water, must learn from the past to be resilient to future challenges while at the same time keeping our people and communities safe and well. We must continue to provide reliable services while leading sustainable stewardship of the watershed in which we operate. Most importantly, we must ensure we operate in a sustainable and equitable manner to enable our key stakeholders to prosper.



The UN Sustainable Development Goals provide guiding principles that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. They were designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.” The SDG’s were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030.

The UN SDG’s provide a lens to enable DC Water to develop a holistic, sustainable and resilient strategic plan.



## Imperatives Overview

Blueprint 2.0 sets out five Organizational Imperatives, which are defined outcomes essential to achieving our strategic ambition over the next five years and beyond. The Imperatives have been developed through engagement with a cross section of key stakeholders and are used to frame our strategy and address our upcoming challenges.



To articulate the narrative of the future DC Water strategy, we use the term 'Imperative', to highlight the importance and urgent need to focus our collective efforts in a targeted manner. The five imperatives are an interconnected system and relationships between each imperative are complex and interwoven.

The Strategic Themes provide clear structure, specific detail and focus to help realize our Imperatives. 'Goals' and accompanying leading or lagging metrics are designed to help us achieve and track our progress. We will strengthen 'Ongoing Activities' and launch specific 'Programs of Work' to achieve our Goals, deliver the Strategic Themes and realize our Organizational Imperatives.



The five imperatives are:

- 
**Healthy, Safe and Well**  
 Is everybody we impact healthy, safe and well?
- 
**Reliable**  
 Can we deliver our agreed service level in an efficient and effective manner?
- 
**Resilient**  
 Are we able to cope with and recover from disruption, anticipating shocks and stressors to maintain service?

- 
**Sustainable**  
 Are we able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?
- 
**Equitable**  
 Are we operating in an equitable manner to enable our employees, partners, customers, and communities to prosper?





## Healthy, Safe and Well

Water is the life source of our community, and the essential services we provide at DC Water must be world-class. Our fundamental priority has to be ensuring DC Water is safe for all – for our customers, our communities, our employees and our contractors.

All of this must also be completed with an ongoing focus on ensuring that both physical and mental health and wellbeing are considered just as importantly as safety.

As we strive to provide reliable services, we must focus first on the question of:

“Is everybody we impact healthy, safe and well?”

### Delivering world-class, healthy water services

DC Water provides essential services to the communities that make up the capital region. It is critical that our customers are kept safe and receive world-class water and wastewater services. We must be role models for other utilities, not just meeting but exceeding the base level of regulatory compliance.

To continue providing an excellent quality product, we need to accelerate our ‘Lead Free DC’ program to replace lead service lines and improve water quality. Our Clean Rivers program is already improving the quality of the Anacostia Watershed, ultimately reducing combined stormwater and sewage discharge into rivers at times of heavy rainfall by 96% upon completion in 2030. To ensure success of the program, we need to work with other water users in the watershed to set higher water quality standards when discharging.

### A safe DC Water for all, above all else

Our front-line staff routinely work around potential hazards and some of our assets are accessible to the public. At every single touchpoint, DC Water must ensure that safety is our number one priority. We must ensure that regardless of whether you are an

employee or a contractor, a customer or a member of our community, that our culture prioritizes keeping everybody safe above all else. Over the past several years, we’ve implemented a ‘good catch program’ which educates our employees on the implications of safety in their daily job functions, completed a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of DC Water’s safety policies and sought opportunities to leverage best practices. Now, we need to embed an enterprise-wide safety culture through training and implementing safety best practices.

### Ensuring together we thrive

The physical and mental health and wellbeing of our employees needs to continue to be considered as important as their safety. We must make sure that we foster an environment that prioritizes mental health, enables people to feel secure and fulfilled in their work. We must actively focus on promoting the importance of mental and physical wellbeing across the entire organization.

“People are our most important asset – of course we have hard assets like pipes, vehicles and machinery but without our people we are nothing. They are the lifeblood of our organization and they keep the most fundamental resource we have, clean and healthy water, flowing for all of our communities. That’s why their safety, physical and mental health, and wellbeing is of paramount focus to our organization because without them we wouldn’t be able to service our communities safely. After all, water is life.”



Lisa Stone  
Chief People & Inclusion Officer



### Lead Free DC

DC Water unified its suite of lead pipe replacement programs under one umbrella, called Lead Free DC with the aim to secure high-quality water at the tap for our customers. Affordability for customers is at the core of this Lead Free DC initiative. In 2019 a historic law established city-funded assistance programs for free and discounted lead pipe replacement. In the first year, lead pipes were removed from 350 homes and saved customers about \$1,000,000 in replacement costs. In June of this year, we unveiled our plan to replace all lead service lines in the District by 2030.



## Reliable

A high performing network of systems and assets is critical to reliability, using real-time monitoring to inform better decision making. Our aim is to continue to deliver an excellent service for customers and ensure we minimize service disruption. This is enabled by ensuring we adopt an integrated and enterprise-wide approach in order to deliver services efficiently.

As we strive to be resilient, we must focus on the question of:

“Can we deliver our agreed service level in an efficient and effective manner?”

### Safeguarding a high performing network of systems and assets

The key to our reliability is our network of high-performing systems and assets including water and sewer pipelines, hydrants, pumps, process facilities, and our IT systems that enable and protect them. We must proactively plan and manage these, in a risk-based manner, to ensure the level of service that our customers need and that we strive to deliver. We need to understand our vulnerabilities and potential failure points to improve reliability. To date, we have successfully improved our planned maintenance regimes. Now we must take an integrated enterprise-wide value-driven approach to managing our assets, to identify weak points and optimize our maintenance and upgrade regimes.

### Delivering excellent service for customers in a timely manner

Customers are at the heart of our organization. We need to continue to proactively engage with our customers and communities to ensure we provide excellent service. Over the past year, we launched a customer communication plan that captures our customers’ expectations and provides messaging to enable better service. There is an opportunity to build on the improvements in communications by leveraging technology and providing data driven services to facilitate more timely response and resolution to customer concerns.

### Minimizing service disruption for customers

We cannot eliminate disruption entirely, but we can reduce service impacts on our customers through a strong focus on minimizing the avoidable. Water, wastewater and storm water services need to be reliable. While infrastructure constraints exist, we can capitalize on active, remote monitoring to mitigate issues and protect our relationship with customers. In the past, sewerage overflows into our waterways have been a significant concern for us and our stakeholders, particularly in the environmental community. The Clean Rivers program will continue to reduce major overflows into our waterways. However, there is a need to build on the Clean Rivers program by addressing smaller capacity sewers through planned investment and initiating real time monitoring.

### Undertaking real time monitoring to inform decision making

Collecting relevant, reliable and real-time data across our organization and assets empowers our teams to improve and optimize the way we operate, allowing for better responses to disruptions, failures and environmental concerns, and informing better investment and resource decision-making. We have already begun leveraging data by enhancing the use of analytics and modeling capabilities across the authority. We have completed and deployed predictive models for water quality, water main breaks, revenue and receipts tracking and meter monitoring. These digital monitoring advances create an enabling environment to achieve other themes within our strategy. We can supplement our analytical capability by implementing a real-time data driven approach using remote monitoring devices enabling planned and predictive maintenance regimes.



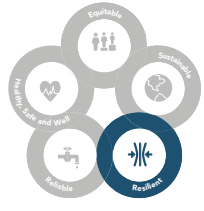
### Enabling the strategy through an integrated, enterprise-wide strategic management approach

Critically empowering the entire strategy is the creation of a unified enterprise-wide management system. Through the integration and optimization of management systems and embedding of knowledge management, we will drive organizational effectiveness and reduce silos throughout DC Water. Over the past year we advanced the Enterprise Performance Plan (EPP) and, in doing so, established a process for data-collection, analysis and reporting. We must now leverage EPP’s successes to extend out and co-create an integrated management system with our staff to facilitate collaboration across clusters to realize efficiencies and formalize knowledge management of the various parts of our business.

“Our customers and communities expect and deserve the best, and we must strive to ensure we are providing services to them whenever they need us. We must ensure that we consistently and reliably provide the best service possible – whether that be through our operations at Blue Plains, or the customer experience delivered by our call centers and customer facing teams, or internally in the way we effectively manage our organization.”



Kishia L. Powell, PE  
Chief Operating Officer



## Resilient

**In order to adapt to shocks and stresses to our system, we must secure assets through proactive maintenance and value-driven asset management.**

This will involve adapting assets susceptible to impacts such as severe weather events while mitigating against the potential future impacts of climate change. In addition, we should consider risks, such as cyber-security and terrorism. Reducing reliance on the energy grid as well as securing the resilience of our water supply is also critical to protecting against long-term stresses.

Resilience challenges aren't unavoidable, and so the Authority must continue to prepare for and learn from emergency scenarios.

Only when we have a resilient system can we truly be sustainable, so we must answer the question:

**"Are we able to cope with and recover from disruption, anticipating shocks and stressors to maintain service?"**

### **Securing resilience of water supply**

Water systems are naturally vulnerable to shocks and stresses, such as weather events, contamination, and terrorism. Due to the criticality of our high-profile supply, we must ensure long-term resilience of our existing and future water sources. We have made strides in identifying water reuse options for use during emergencies and partnered with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to establish source water monitoring for early warning contaminant detection of the Potomac River. Our next steps are to collate this work through a strategic integrated water resource program utilizing best practices from global utilities and other sectors.

### **Securing assets through value-driven asset management and proactive maintenance**

An enhanced value-driven asset management approach will be a core enabler to realizing our Resilient imperative. An integrated and portfolio

approach enables stewardship, across all our assets: physical, financial, intellectual and human resources. To build resilience in our assets, we must embed this value-driven approach into our asset management plan. In Blueprint 2.0 we are presented with an opportunity to shift to a life-cycle cost approach to manage the whole of life costs of our assets more effectively.

### **Adapting to the impacts of climate change**

The impacts of climate change are predicted to have a significant impact on the water sector. It is urgent for us to adjust our systems in response to more severe and frequent weather events to moderate impacts of an actual or expected future climate. The cost-benefit ratio of proactively investing in resilient water resources and infrastructure will mean we may invest more initially but save money over the long term. Investing in resilience now will enable us to absorb short-term shocks and long-term stressors and reduce deferred, long term financial outlays. We must engage wider stakeholders to launch a program to enhance resilience within our watershed, considering assets, environment, and the local community. It should include flood protections, economic and operational vulnerabilities in our system to understand potential costs of climate related disasters and opportunities to strengthen resilience in our system.

### **Mitigating the future impacts of climate change**

The water industry contributes a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions – we need to take measures to act sustainably and mitigate against climate change. If there is a shock that results in limited or no energy supply, the water system will also fail to deliver – highlighting the cascading failures of fragile, interdependent systems. We must take accountability for our emissions, contribute to sustainable development while also enhancing our resilience. We must therefore set up a net zero carbon emissions program and reduce reliance on the energy grid. There are opportunities to allocate our own land to renewable energy and innovate our assets and fleet to produce less emissions.



### **Preparing for and learning from emergency responses**

Our communities are already susceptible to flooding. With increasingly severe and frequent storms, the impact on our communities stands to worsen. We need to continuously learn from emergency responses of the past to better prepare for the future. We must focus on enhancing our proactive response plans and embed learning into emergency readiness planning, including engaging and coordinating with DC stakeholders – DC Government, police, and public health to ensure roles and responsibilities in an emergency are well understood. We continue to improve communication with our customers, employees, and wider communities during an emergency through multiple mediums and platforms.

### **Protecting against the current and future cybersecurity risks**

Cyber threats are becoming more prevalent with the potential to significantly impact our customers, employees, and wider communities. A targeted cyber-attack could have a vast impact and result in intentional contamination of water supplies or leaked customer data. We must protect our systems, stakeholders, and services from such risks. Our cyber security team is coordinating with partners to prepare for potential attacks. To prevent, we must strengthen our cyber risk readiness assessment program including promoting cyber security awareness and measures to employees. To be prepared to respond to an attack, we will launch a cyber incident response plan that considers the readiness assessment program findings.



**Marc Battle**  
Chief Legal Officer

**"The world is changing faster than ever before and that increasingly puts pressures on all organizations. These short-term shocks and long-term stressors pose an unavoidable risk to the authority and our ability to service our nation's capital. That's why we must safeguard our assets and our organization to be as resilient as possible to future events. While these events might not be within our direct control, our preparedness and ability to respond and recover must be of critical focus to us."**





# Sustainable

Sustainability is about balancing the economic and social value we create with the environmental impact of doing so. Ensuring that we make efficient use of economic resources through operating efficiency and resource recovery and reuse is key.

To deliver this, aligned partnerships and projects will be required with broader watershed stakeholders to ensure that sustainability principles are incorporated across all watershed aspects. Internally, this must be supported by a sustainably driven operating and delivery model, focused on developing the correct culture that drives trust, teamwork, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

Sustainability makes financial sense too – reducing demand and potential losses due to natural disaster and identifying alternative and innovative funding sources.

To ensure we can serve our stakeholders equitably, we should first ensure we can answer the question:

“Are we able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?”

## Recovering and reusing our planet’s limited resources

With a limited number of resources available we must capitalize on opportunities to promote sustainable consumption and production. This includes identifying ways we can recover resources and reuse our byproducts. We must also optimize resources we currently use across our system to ensure we are as efficient as possible. We have an opportunity to build on our previous success by continuing to find new opportunities to generate revenue from our byproducts through innovations and ongoing research and development and implementing solar.

## Ensuring efficient use of economic resources

Resources are required to upgrade aging infrastructure, protect against impacts of climate change, undertake digital transformation, retain talent and institutional knowledge among other necessary costs. It is critical that we maintain our usual level of service and pivot to the future, while balancing this with ensuring our rates are affordable for all. An operational efficiency program to identify opportunities to better control expenditures will enable us to find cost savings and invest them back in the organization. A new investment model will be considered to ensure we continue to make optimal investment decisions.

## Embedding a sustainable operating and delivery model

Aligning our assets and operations with our human resources is key to ensuring an effective, efficient, and sustainable operating and delivery model. We must ensure we are capitalizing on the skills of our workforce, succession planning for the future and embedding knowledge transfer to increase organizational resilience. Over the past year, we conducted a comprehensive review and evaluation of all DC Water staff positions and subsequently developed training programs that meet the needs of each job group. We must build on the training programs to embed an operating and delivery culture which formalizes succession planning, attracts talent and continues to promote appropriate training.

## Aligning partnerships and projects in a watershed management approach

Water is a shared resource and best practice water governance requires a holistic watershed management approach. We are situated within the Anacostia Watershed with many upstream and downstream stakeholders impacting the water quality and environment. For the outcomes of our strategy to be achieved, we must aspire to influence upstream and downstream stakeholders to coordinate, align and incorporate our sustainability principles. If we are aligned with all relevant stakeholders, we can leverage investment for better solutions. We will strengthen existing partnerships and align to achieve common watershed objectives.

## Identifying innovative funding and financing

Like all public agencies, we are constantly asked to do more with less, and therefore finding alternative sources of funding to finance critical capital investment is key. To achieve our transformational strategy, including financing urgent asset upgrades, we must look at further approaches to utilize alternative and innovative sources of funding and financing moving forward. We must fill gaps in which operational efficiencies can’t close through a plan to capitalize on alternative or innovative funding opportunities.

## Encouraging sustainability and efficiency through rate structures

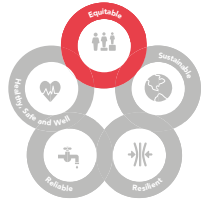
Our customers expect leadership around sustainability challenges and as consumption behaviors change and water usage per capita declines, we must assess how we can manage our rate structures moving forward. We must balance our cost recovery requirements with our pursuit of sustainable outcomes and the reduction in scarce resource use. We must work to ensure that our rate structure promotes sustainability outcomes while ensuring revenue covers our costs.

“Sustainability is about addressing the social, environmental and economic needs of both today and tomorrow. We have an opportunity today to take an authority-wide approach to balancing the needs of our communities with the impact of delivering for them, so that we can meet the needs of the present, without the compromising the ability of future generations to meet those of their own.”



Matthew Brown  
Chief Financial Officer





# Equitable

DC Water’s desire to be an equitable organization touches on all parts of the Authority, starting with the decisions we make around infrastructure. Carefully considered infrastructure projects have the ability to greatly empower vulnerable communities and ensure that work happens in the areas where the negative impact of not doing it may be most felt.

This type of decision-making requires the organization to ensure there are people that understand these challenges. Clear representation of these communities requires an organization focused on equality, diversity and inclusion.

With an equity focus, we should ultimately be able to ensure that there are affordable and equitable rates for all customers.

To ensure we can serve our stakeholders equitably, we should first ensure we can answer the question:

“Are we operating in an equitable manner to enable our employees, partners, customers and communities to prosper?”

## Embedding equitable infrastructure decision-making

We must ensure that our capital spending and infrastructure decisions are made equitably, protecting the needs of the most vulnerable communities and neighborhoods. Where possible, we need to target infrastructure programs with equitable principles in mind, ensuring our vulnerable neighborhoods are protected from flooding and sewer overflows. To do this, we need to continue to engage with wider stakeholder groups and elected officials.

## Empowering communities through equitable projects

We need to continue to engage and inform our key stakeholders in decisions on projects and initiatives that impact them. This will maximize the likelihood of achieving our intended outcomes. Over the past year, we’ve conducted town hall events, engaging over 4000 customers. This year, we must reach the stakeholders that we are yet to engage during the critical planning periods. We must reach them by promoting active, free and meaningful participation by community members into the design of projects and initiatives.

## Providing affordable and equitable rates

Water is a human right. Some customers already struggle to pay bills and with increasing operating costs and the need to upgrade infrastructure, rates are being challenged. We must continue to provide equitable and affordable rates that ensure our customers not only have access but are able to pay a fair share of the cost of service. During COVID-19, we successfully set up new customer assistance programs, to ensure no one went without water. We must build on this to find alternatives to the consumption-based model and identify shifts to water equity, water management practices and conservation models.

## Ensuring inclusive and diverse representation

We cannot deliver the best for our customers, employees and wider communities if we do not reflect them. We need to continue to ensure diversity flows through all levels of our organization and is embedded in our culture. Our diverse leadership team is setting the example for our organization to follow. We must ensure the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion are an integral part of our decision making and extend to the talent we attract and retain at DC Water.

## A totally engaged and aligned DC Water

We cannot deliver an ambitious strategy like this, without all of our staff, from the boardroom to the breakroom, being engaged and empowered. If we treat our staff fairly and with respect, providing transparency in our ambitions and decision-making, we will ensure everybody is proud to say, “I work for DC Water.” We must ensure all our employees receive fair treatment, there is transparency in decision-making, and all employees are engaged and know what to expect. We can build on the ‘We Are DC Water’ outreach to continue to promote honorable work at DC Water both internally and externally. Additionally, we will undertake participatory engagement with staff to understand how best to engage and make them feel honored to work here.

“We are so fortunate that the communities that we serve are some of the most vibrant, active and diverse anywhere in the nation. But with this comes the challenges of servicing all our stakeholders in a fair and just manner. Equality of opportunity and numbers-based decision making needs to make for equity driven conversations that guarantee minimum standards for all, and that we get help to those who truly need it the most. Justice is everybody’s responsibility.”



Kirsten Williams  
Chief Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Officer



# Developing and mobilizing the strategy

## Developing the strategy

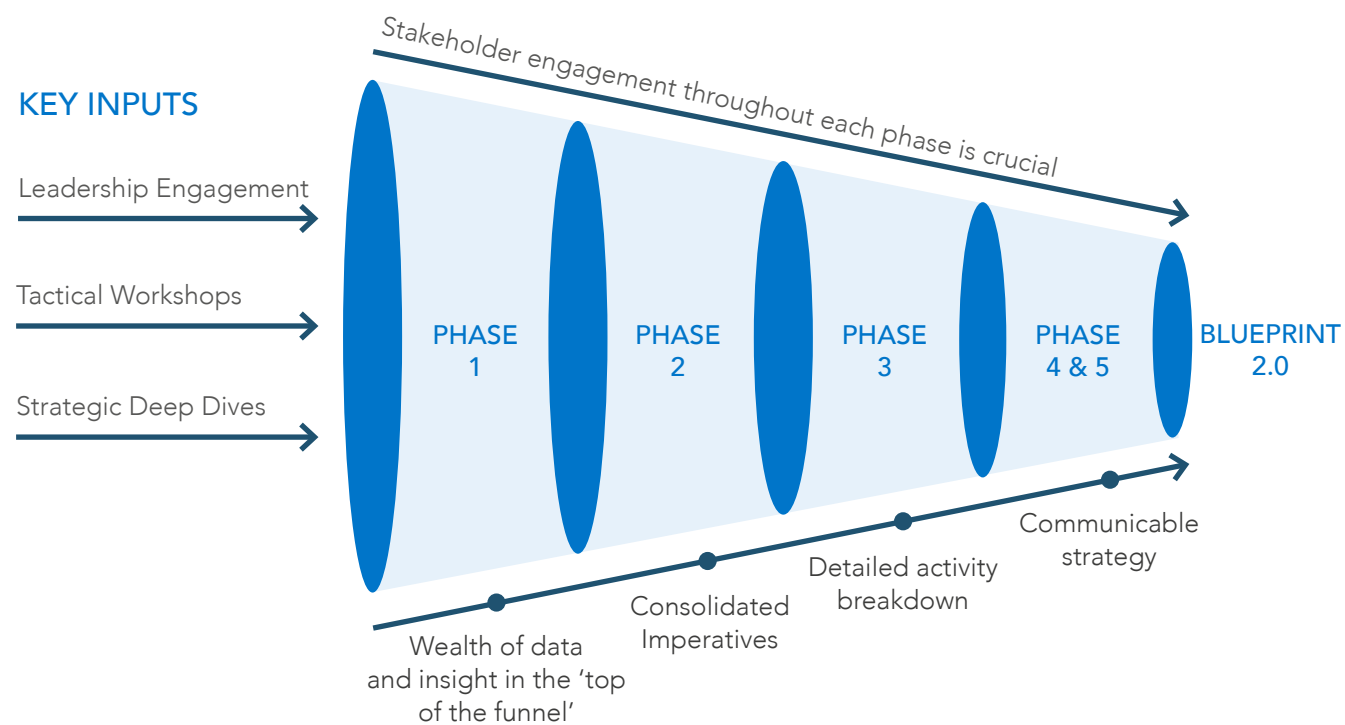
The Strategy & Performance team has led a robust and unique process to shape and develop Blueprint 2.0, defining our strategy to 2027. Over the past 8 months we have engaged with more than 200 staff members, the Board of Directors and the CEO's Stakeholder Alliance across a five phased approach to ensure we have embedded a broad perspective and insight into the five-year strategic plan. Our response is based on the key building blocks of strategic planning which include: a critical diagnosis of the challenges (both internal and external) by engaging staff through interviews and workshops, a clearly defined set of imperatives and strategic themes, and a coherent set of coordinated actions, resource allocation and goals over the strategic planning period. The unique and participatory approach gathered insights from a cross section of DC Water's staff and has resulted in a co-created holistic strategy.

Together, we have expanded our thinking, utilizing global best practices and a range of frameworks and tools including the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), City Water Resilience Approach (CWRA), and horizon scanning and visioning workshops. The SDGs provided key guiding principles to expand the breadth of our thinking and recognize that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. The CWRA brought DC Water staff together to share their perspectives and identify potential enterprise-wide vulnerabilities when faced with internal and external shocks and stresses. The CWRA assessment identified an opportunity to shift toward a holistic and integrated systems thinking as part of Blueprint 2.0.

## Contributions from our staff

We developed the strategy with critical input from a cross section of DC Water stakeholders at each stage of the process and would like to express our gratitude to many of our staff who gave their time and expertise to provide insights. In the development of this strategy, we challenged ourselves to go beyond our immediate focus to consider the longer-term and external impacts on our operations, people and communities.



## Mobilizing the strategy

This document has set out our Blueprint 2.0 and our ambition to 2027. In the second half of 2021, the Strategy and Performance team will be concentrating efforts on mobilizing our new strategy. We will work with our staff to define our specific Goals to ensure effective strategy execution which will be supported by a robust governance framework. The governance framework will set out accountable and responsible owners for each Imperative and Theme and outline the reporting process with the Board. The Imperative Accountable Owners are members of the Senior Executive Team. Their role will be to sponsor each imperative and support the Theme Responsible Owners in ensuring the theme requirements are delivered, while Theme Responsible Owners will be leading day-to-day management. After setting our Goals, we will identify existing activities and projects that contribute, conduct a gap analysis and identify new projects and Programs of Work to launch from later in 2021.

Post launch, we will be supporting teams to track progress of new Programs of Work and ongoing activities to achieve the set Goals, deliver our Strategic Themes and satisfy our Organizational Imperatives. We plan to hold briefing sessions at regular intervals to keep the wider organization informed of key milestones. As we approach the launch of Blueprint 2.0, we will be focusing on an Imperative each month with several events to share targeted and specific information. Quarterly and annual strategic reports will be shared with the Board who will have a key role in ensuring we are held accountable and are progressing toward our goals. Each report will capture a summary of our efforts and progress across all Imperatives and Themes, highlighting areas of outstanding achievement and identifying areas that require more support.

Ongoing communication and strategy launch events with our staff:

- 1 Mobilizing working groups
- 2 Assign key roles and responsibilities
- 3 Develop 'Goals' and 'Programs of Works'
- 4 Launch Blueprint 2.0 Strategy
- 5 Begin measuring performance against Strategy Goals

“Our new strategy, Blueprint 2.0, is the critical enabler for the future direction of authority – through listening to the voices of our staff, our communities and our stakeholders we have crafted something which is going to be a real turning point for our organization. With this new strategy, we intend to shift the needle of our focus from thinking about strategy in terms of *what* we need to do, to *why and how* we intend to make the change needed for our communities.”

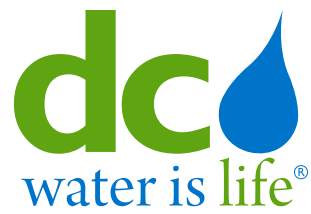


Wayne Griffith  
Chief Strategy and  
Performance Officer



**“Blueprint 2.0 will accentuate our standing in the water and wastewater industry, ensure we continue to deliver unparalleled water services to our community and position the organization to address the needs of the future.”**

David L. Gadis, CEO



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