

Communicate to Innovate



Public works staff everywhere are on the front lines facing the challenges of building and maintaining our infrastructure—they don't have the option of leaving a sewer line clogged, letting the water run from a broken water main, leaving the snow unplowed, or taking time off during an unprecedented storm.

The Iowa Public Works Service Bureau (PWSB) was established to provide information to improve the connectivity, knowledge, and efficiency of these essential workers by opening much-needed communication lines and fostering productive discussions among city staff.

What is the Iowa PWSB?

The Iowa Highway Research Board awarded a grant to the Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS) program at Iowa State University to establish the Iowa PWSB. One project task included in the grant involves securing permanent financing for the PWSB.

The service bureau's goal is to demonstrate to the Iowa Legislature and municipal leadership across Iowa the value of providing public works staff with a free platform to "communicate to innovate."

How Can Cities Benefit from the Iowa PWSB?

Iowa PWSB staff possesses an in-depth understanding of the workings of public works departments. The Iowa PWSB helps Iowa cities in the following ways:

- Improves communication among public works staff across cities in Iowa, resulting in improved efficiency in operating and maintaining local infrastructure
- Fosters dialogue between public works colleagues across the state who have experienced similar situations
- Provides cities specific data about what is working for other cities in Iowa to help make informed decisions and develop policies
- Produces tools to help cities compare their operations (e.g., street maintenance cost per mile) with others of similar populations
- Offers a forum for cities to compare their public works policies (e.g., snowplowing, sidewalk inspection) with others
- Maintains a job board for city staff to post job opportunities directly with Iowa's public works groups



Connecting Cities of All Sizes Throughout Iowa



An Example of PWSB Resources Put Into Action

A public works director at an Iowa city is interested in expanding a lane or otherwise improving mobility on a street. The director may follow these steps once they register for free and log in to IowaPWSB.org:

1. Check out the Capacity Improvements **Report** to see how much cities of a similar size spent on their projects.
2. Visit the **Contacts** page to reach out to members in those cities to get more details about their projects.
3. Start a post in the **Forum** to more broadly gauge what projects worked best in other cities.
4. Check the new **Bid Tab Report** to develop an accurate estimate of the project cost when ready to start the project.
5. Post a position on the **Job Board** or check for **Training and Educational Opportunities** for new staff to help with the project.

With over 900 cities in the state and each with differing activities within their public works departments, the ability to communicate and exchange information statewide is needed and had been lacking until the Iowa PWSB, which has free membership, was developed. In just two years of operation, the Iowa PWSB has over 500 registered users.

Provide Valuable Resources for Public Works Staff

Reports

The Iowa PWSB has more than a dozen interactive dashboards and charts accessible to members to compare their streets and spending with cities of similar sizes and/or budgets. This resource is regularly updated. Additionally, video tutorials are available to assist public works staff in better using this resource.

Connect with Colleagues

Contacts

Anyone registered as a member has access to the contact information of other members. The list is a valuable tool that allows cities to connect and exchange information pertinent to cities of similar sizes or undertaking similar projects.

Forum

One of the most invaluable pieces of the PWSB website is a place where colleagues can pose and discuss questions. New discussions are happening all the time, which truly helps cities communicate to innovate!

Improve Work Efficiencies

Bid Tab Report

The Iowa PWSB website provides members with a database that includes bid quantities and unit costs using the SUDAS program bid items. This interactive report, which includes over 500 awarded contracts from throughout the state, allows city staff to see what other cities are paying for the same items, potentially saving cities time and money in the bidding process. It is one of the most popular and highly praised features of the site.

Job Board

There are many avenues to post job openings, but the Iowa PWSB is the go-to source for Iowa cities specifically looking for public works staff. The job board is publicly available to anyone, but only members can post open positions.

Learn New Techniques

Training and Educational Opportunities

Attendance at workshops and trainings for public works staff is expected to continue to have record-breaking numbers in 2023, after a 12% increase in 2022. The Iowa PWSB is posting available upcoming trainings in the state and listing the organizations to help connect city staff with the training opportunities in Iowa and online.