

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS



## 5 CITIES PLUS ST. LOUIS 2026

“Building Organizational Resilience”

September 21–23, 2026

Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch  
315 Chestnut Street | St. Louis, MO 63102

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Abstract Submittals due  
Monday, June 29, 2026



[5citiesplus.org](https://5citiesplus.org)



## 5 CITIES PLUS 2026

### INVITATION

The Call for Abstracts for the 5 Cities Plus 2026 Conference, “Building Organizational Resilience” is now open to all interested parties. The annual Midwest conference provides an opportunity to collaborate among peers and share learning experiences from operating similar wastewater utilities.

The 5 Cities Plus 2025 Conference “Leading Through Uncertain Times” in Louisville sparked valuable discussions on the importance of clean water utilities remaining steadfast even amidst social uncertainty. The 2026 Conference looks to focus on key factors of organizational resilience across infrastructure, workforce, climate readiness, and technological innovation. The technical committee members are excited to welcome the attendees to expand the knowledge base of our industry and collaborate on solutions. We look forward to your attendance as a delegate in 2026 and seeing you in St. Louis!

Rich Unverferth and Bret Berthold  
*Planning Committee Chairmen*

Kimberly Duke  
Chris Bergmann  
Jim Dunajcik  
Jenna Jarvis  
*Planning Committee Members*

## SUBJECT AND TOPICS

With the 5 Cities Plus 2026 theme of “Building Organizational Resilience” in mind, the technical committee has created the following list of preliminary topics. For a range of diverse solutions to each topic, 3–4 abstracts will be selected for the subject and organized into sessions.

- Operations
  - Resilience Through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  - Fleet Management and Sustainability
- Engineering
  - Predicting and Adapting to Climate Shifts – Designing Resilient Wastewater and Stormwater Infrastructure
  - Resilient Asset Management Strategies
  - Adaptable Construction Management Processes
- Environmental/Climate Resilience
  - Emerging Contaminants and Forever Chemicals (Regulatory Agility)
- HR and Workforce
  - Employee Retention and Team Building
  - Training the Next Generation/Building the Workforce
  - Knowledge Transfer and Succession Planning
- Laboratory and Compliance
  - Public Health Pioneers/Epidemiology
  - Sludge and Biosolids Innovation and Regulation
- IT
  - Data Management and Information Governance (Data Security)
  - Cybersecurity
  - Smart Infrastructure Technology Applications (AI)

- Finance and Admin
  - Developing New Funding Mechanisms with the Threat of Reduced Federal Funding
- Customer Service and Public Relations
  - Social Media/Proactive Communication
  - Adapting to Information Overload and Burnout/Keeping Residents Engaged

## PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION

Applicants may submit a proposal in the form of an abstract and include the following information in their submittal. Submissions should demonstrate significant knowledge in sewer operations and management or a related topic beneficial to the industry. Only an oral presentation (with PowerPoint) will be considered for this conference. Submissions should be sent to [abstractsubmissions@stlmsd.com](mailto:abstractsubmissions@stlmsd.com). Abstract submissions should include the following:

- Author’s name(s) and affiliation(s)
- Topic (from previous list)
- Title of presentation
- Abstract paragraph with synopsis of subject matter
- Contact person’s email address, postal address, and phone number

Abstracts that have been authored by representatives of the participating agencies will be given first preference. Any proposal that has been co-authored should be presented by the agency and not the associated consultant. Authors will be notified of the outcome of the review in order to prepare the full presentation. At least one author of each selected presentation must register and attend the conference to present. Authors must pay their own expenses to the conference. Any comments or questions can be directed to [jjarvis@stlmsd.com](mailto:jjarvis@stlmsd.com).

## STRUCTURE OF THE SESSIONS

The conference will be organized in 25-minute thematic sessions with 5 minutes for questions at the end of each presentation. The working language of the conference is English. Any special audio-visual needs should be noted in the submittal, and the conference will try to accommodate those needs. The deadlines for submittal are as follows:

Abstract Submission.....	Monday, June 29, 2026
Author’s Notification .....	Thursday, July 16, 2026
Final Presentation Submission.....	Thursday, September 10, 2026
2026 Conference .....	September 21–23, 2026