



MEAN Services Committee Meeting

Younes Conference Center, Kearney, Nebraska

January 21, 2026

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Call to Order

Bill Hinton
Committee Chair



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Call to Order

- Nebraska Open Meetings Act – Section 84-1412 (8)
- Roll Call



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Public Comment Period



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Public Participation Policy - Summary

- Any member of the public may speak, subject to these rules
- Individuals must state the following:
 - **Name**
 - **Address** (unless the address requirement is waived to protect the security of the individual), and
 - **Name of any organization represented** by such person
- Public comment period will be a maximum of 30 minutes
- Comments are limited to 3 minutes per person
- Address comments to the Committee as a body and not to any individual member thereof
- Disruptive conduct is not allowed & individual may be asked to leave meeting



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Consent Agenda



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Consent Agenda

- Approval of Minutes of the May 21, 2025 Meeting
- The next meeting of the Services Committee will be held on May 20, 2026 at the Younes Conference Center South, in Kearney, Nebraska.



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Consent Resolution

Approval of the consent resolution as found on page 3 of the meeting packet.



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Services Update



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Centralized Municipal Utility Training Center

Bruce Doll

Director of Utility Services and Member Relations



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Centralized Municipal Utility Training Center



- Assessed training by EDS Services Team
 - ▶ What would make training better?
 - ▶ Who would be involved?
 - ▶ How much would it cost?
- Met with the City of Grand Island Utilities Department (GIUD)
 - ▶ GIUD expressed need for utility training as well
 - ▶ Access to potential sites for training
- Pitched training idea with other municipal utilities across Nebraska
- **Feedback: Municipals need expanded utility training**
- Visited with League of Nebraska Municipalities (LNM), Kansas Municipal Utilities (KMU) and Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities (IAMU)



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Next Steps for Centralized Utility Training Center

- Assemble Committee
 - ▶ Ongoing meetings by municipal utility representatives from MEAN and non-MEAN communities over next several months
 - Assess training needs of utilities
 - Tap experience of utility representatives and MEAN Staff
 - Develop program curriculum



Initial Goal: Multi-day hands-on and classroom training in September 2026 at site in Grand Island.



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MEAN Member Services Survey Results

Bruce Doll
Director of Utility Services and Member Relations



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Engagement & Voice of the Member

- **Broad Participation:** 54 utilities participated, providing a statistically strong cross-section of the MEAN membership.
- **Who we heard from:** Primary respondents include **City Administrators/Clerks (57%)** and **Electric Superintendents/Operations Staff (54%)**.
- **High Visibility:** 87% of the membership interacts with EDS and Member Relations staff regularly ("Frequently" or "Occasionally").
- **The Intent:** This data provides a "pulse check" on our members' current environment. We are reviewing this data to ensure our service evolution aligns with their needs and welcome any initial reflections from the Committee.



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Service Delivery & Responsiveness

Context: Members were asked to rate their satisfaction with response times and MEAN Staff interactions.

- **High Satisfaction:** Our current "reactive" support is a core strength of the organization.
 - **92% satisfaction** for EDS response times.
 - **84% satisfaction** for Member Relations response times.
- **Member Sentiment:** Open-ended comments consistently describe MEAN Staff as "professional," "knowledgeable," and "helpful problem solvers."
- **Observation:** The high level of trust in MEAN Staff provides a solid foundation as we explore expanding our service offerings.



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Quality Ratings – Areas for Discussion

Context: Members rated specific services on a 1–5 scale. While core services like Mutual Aid and Relationship Building scored near 4.0, the following represent the two lowest-rated areas for each department to help identify potential growth opportunities.

Electric Distribution Services (Question 4):

1. **Meter Audits & Metering Support (3.62):** While still rated "Good," this is the lowest-rated technical service.
2. **Predictive Maintenance / Infrared Scans (3.66):** An area where we can discuss if current scheduling or member awareness could be improved.

Member Relations Services (Question 7):

1. **Support for Economic Development (3.26):** The lowest score in the survey. Members expressed a desire for more proactive help in growing community electric load.
2. **Public Presentations & Community Engagement (3.38):** Reflects a need for assistance in communicating utility value and rate impacts to local boards and the public.



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Quality Ratings – Areas for Discussion



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Top Challenges Facing the Membership

Question #12: "Which challenges does your utility currently face?" Members were asked to select all that apply. These three issues represent the primary external pressures identified by the majority of our members:

- Aging Infrastructure (63.8%):** The leading concern across the membership.
- Financial or Rate Pressure (55.3%):** Navigating the economic balance of local budgets versus rising costs.
- Workforce Shortages (48.9%):** The industry-wide struggle to find and retain qualified technical staff.

Note: Other significant challenges noted by members included Limited Staff Time (38%) and Training Gaps (36%).

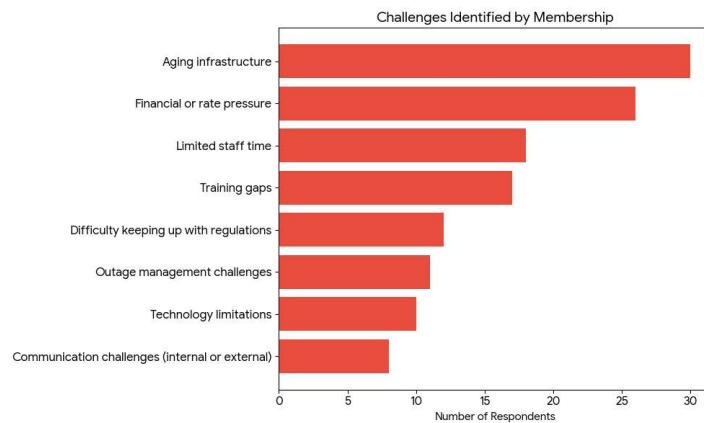


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Top Challenges Facing the Membership



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Identifying High-Value Future Services

Members were asked to select the **TOP 5** services that would provide the most value to their utility. The results show a clear desire for MEAN to support the "Business" and "Governance" of the utility:



- **Grant Support (72.3%)**: Assistance in identifying and applying for infrastructure funding.
- **Rate & Cost of Service (COS) Studies (57.4%)**: Professional data to help local boards navigate financial planning.
- **Workforce Development (55.3%)**: Support for recruitment and technical crew training.
- **Economic Development Support (46.8%)**: Proactive help in community growth and load-building.
- **Leadership & Governance Training (44.7%)**: Training for boards and councils to support effective local utility management.

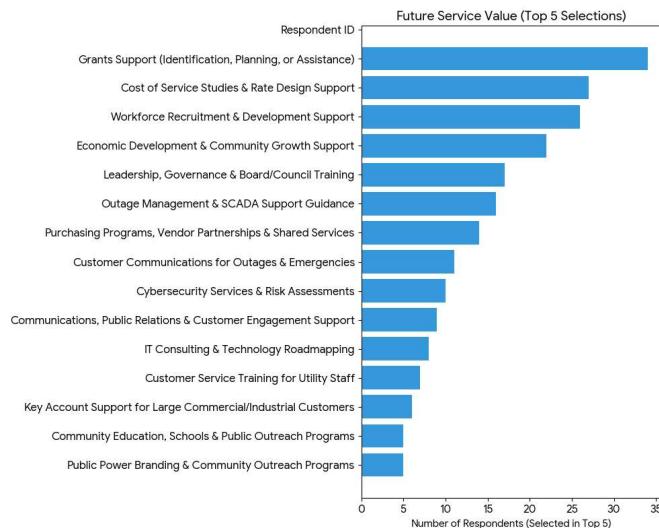


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Identifying High-Value Future Services



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The Appetite for New Services

The Cost Factor: 55% of members identify cost as a "Very" or "Extremely" important factor in their decision-making.

If we include "Important," that number jumps to 87%.

Adoption Likelihood: 62% of members are "Likely" or "Very Likely" to utilize new or expanded services if offered by MEAN.

Takeaway: There is a strong appetite for growth; only 4% of the membership expressed a lack of interest.

Market Reality: While members are eager for more support, every new service is scrutinized through a lens of local rate impact and budget sustainability.



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Identifying Barriers & Member-Led Solutions

Top 3 Barriers to Adoption:

1. Direct Cost (Primary Barrier): The most cited hurdle is simply the financial "buy-in" for new programs.

1. Demonstrated Need/Value: Members need to see a clear, immediate benefit to their specific local utility before committing.

1. Member Bandwidth: Even for "free" services, the time required for local staff to engage is a limiting factor.



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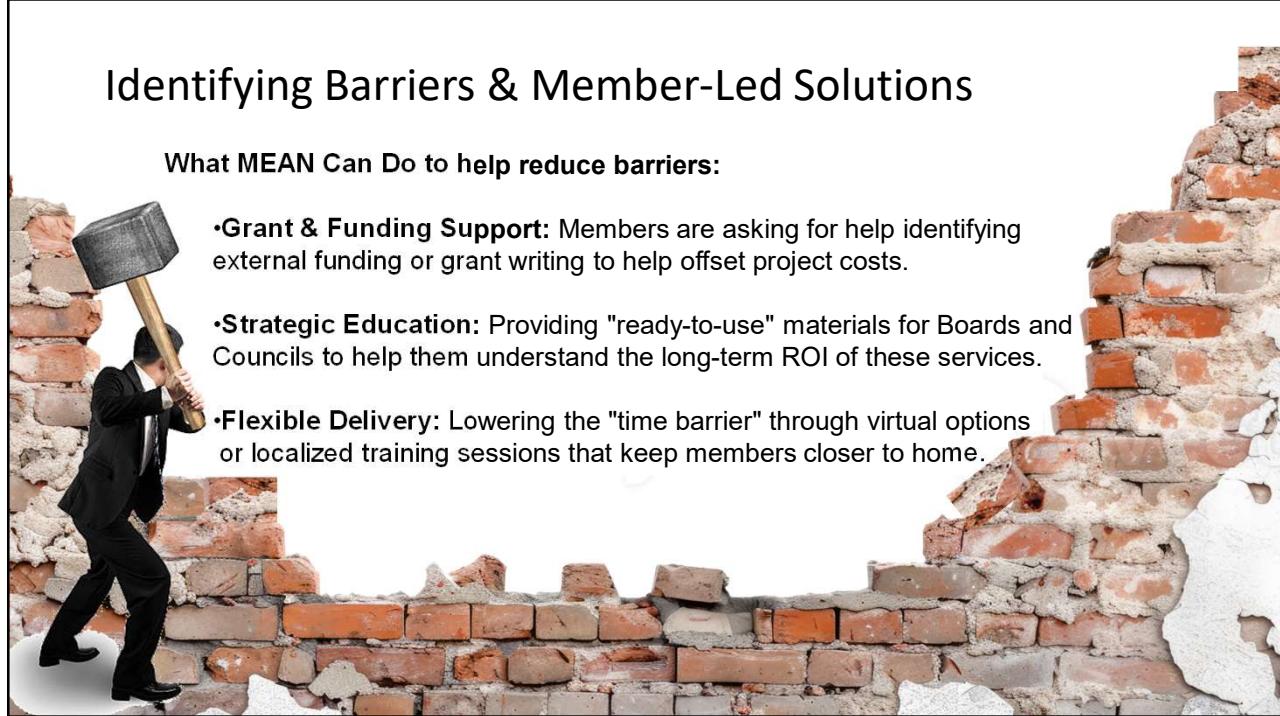
Identifying Barriers & Member-Led Solutions

What MEAN Can Do to help reduce barriers:

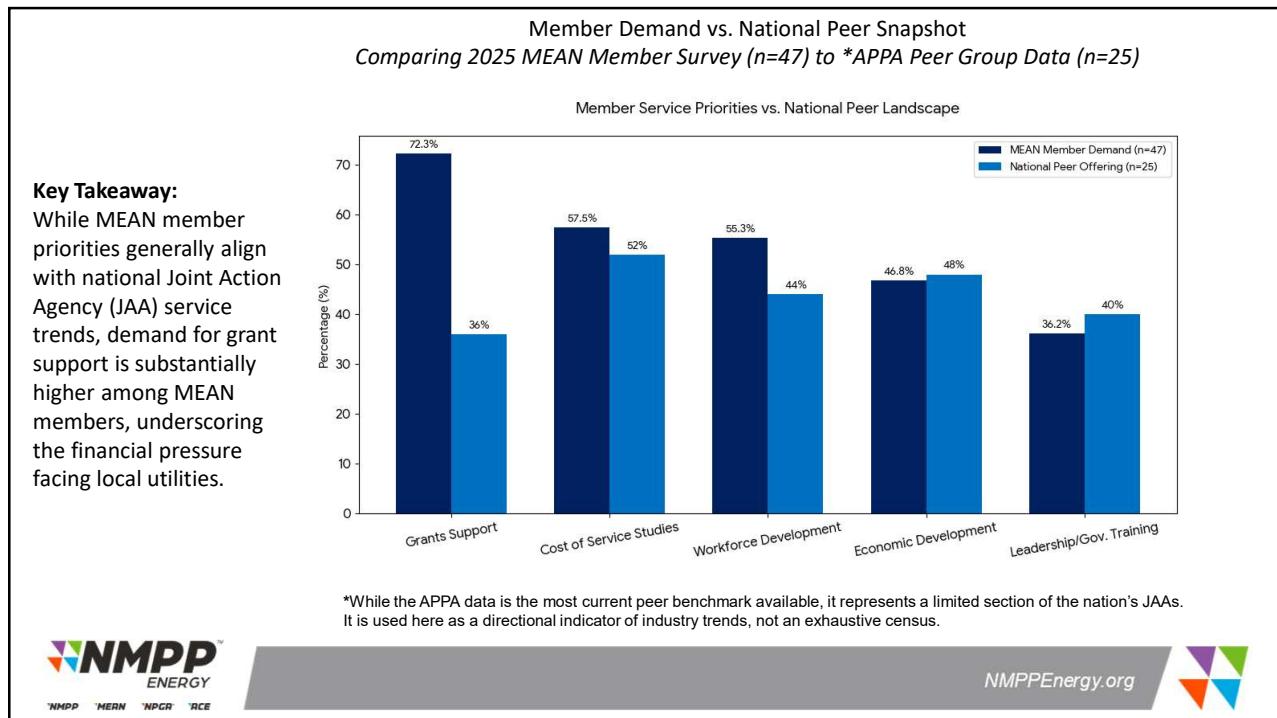
- Grant & Funding Support:** Members are asking for help identifying external funding or grant writing to help offset project costs.

- Strategic Education:** Providing "ready-to-use" materials for Boards and Councils to help them understand the long-term ROI of these services.

- Flexible Delivery:** Lowering the "time barrier" through virtual options or localized training sessions that keep members closer to home.



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The "Service Model" Comparison Direct vs. Facilitated Services

What the APPA Data Shows:
 Many Joint Action Agencies deliver complex services using a **facilitator model**—coordinating trusted partners rather than providing every service in-house.

Examples from Peer Agencies:

- **Rate & Cost-of-Service Studies:** More often *facilitated* than delivered directly
- **Member Financing Programs:** Commonly *coordinated* with external partners
- **Joint Purchasing:** Frequently offered through *vendor partnerships*

What This Means for MEAN:
 This model would allow MEAN to expand high-value services while managing cost, staffing, and risk—and still meeting member needs.

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Summary & Committee Discussion



MEAN Perspective: The survey confirms that members value our current staff and core services.

Members primary anxieties—**Infrastructure, Rates, and Workforce**—suggest a clear demand for more strategic and financial support.

Discussion Invite for the Committee:

- Do these results align with the challenges you see in your own communities?
- Regarding the lower-rated areas (Economic Development, Public Presentations, Metering), are these areas the Committee would like us to prioritize for improvement?
- **Next Steps:** MEAN Staff will continue analyzing this data to inform 2026 goal planning. We welcome any initial direction or areas the Committee would like us to investigate further.



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Service Tracker Update



Bruce Doll
Director of Utility Services and Member Relations



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Service Tracker Update

- What is Service Tracker?
 - ▶ Application developed in-house that allows EDS team to note their field activities

Tracker Info on 12/23/2025	
Community	CITY OF LYONS, NE
Program	Utility Infrastructure Program
Service	Predictive Maintenance Service
Sub Category	Distribution system detailed inspection
Service Date	12/23/2025
Status	IN PROGRESS
Notes	met with Aaron and City of Longmont to discuss emergency feed

- From September 2025 – December 2025, the EDS team visited 48 MEAN participants (79%).
 - ▶ This includes multiple visits to 15 participants (25%).



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Service Tracker Update

Primary Field Activities

- Metering & CT Testing
- Solar Project Support
- System Inspections & Planning
- Voltage & Conversion Projects
- Training, Safety & Reliability Support



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Outage Software Pilot Program

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Director of Utility Services and Member Relations



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Outage Software Pilot Program



The Technology: **Outifi** uses AI-enabled tools to proactively notify customers of outages and restoration status, reducing the burden on utility staff.

Vetting Status: Consistently positive feedback from current utility users in OK and KS regarding ease of use and improved customer communication.

MEAN's Role (Facilitator): * Coordinating a pilot group of 4–5 utilities (1 already committed). Exploring grant opportunities to minimize the cost of the evaluation phase.

Program Outcome: Upon completion, MEAN will provide a final evaluation of the software's value.

Note: *The goal is to provide members with the data needed to make their own independent adoption decisions.*



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