

Survey analysis

Authority survey questions

Municipalities served:

1 municipality	34
2-4 municipalities	58
5+ municipalities	28

Notable for serving large areas: Alcosan, Allegheny Valley Joint Sewage Authority, Authority of the Borough of Charleroi, Butler Area Sewer Authority, Highridge Water Authority (Indiana County), Indiana County Municipal Services Authority, Moon Township Municipal Authority, Municipal Authority of the Borough of Oakmont, Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County, North Fayette County Municipal Authority (20 municipalities), and Southwestern Pennsylvania Water Authority (18 municipalities)

When was your infrastructure first built?

pre-1900	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
7	8	2	1	5	5	20

1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Not yet built
16	21	11	7	4	3

What is the total amount spent on capital improvements for the past ten years?

Under \$500,000	10
\$500,000 to under 1M	6
1M to under 2M	13
2M to under 5M	20
5M to under 10M	10
10M to under 20M	15
20M or more	10

Median: \$4 million

Total: approximately \$769 million

Average: over \$9 million

Highest: MAWC over \$100 million; ICMSA \$67 million; Saxonburg Area Authority \$65 million; Economy Borough Municipal Authority \$45 million; West Mifflin Sanitary Sewer Municipal Authority \$45 million

Lowest: Marianna-West Bethlehem Joint Sewer Authority \$25-30,000; Mt. Morris Water and Sewage Authority \$31,447; Blairsville Borough Authority \$35,000; Gilpin Township Municipal Authority says “routine maintenance only”

How many people work in the following fields outside of serving on this board?

Government	50
Private sector	313
Non-profit	19
Retired	194

Board structure: Most authorities have five-member boards, though a few are larger. Fifty-four percent of all board members come from the private sector, 9 percent from government, and fewer than 4 percent from the nonprofit sector. In the “other” category under the question about where board members work, 65 respondents indicated that they have a cumulative total of 194 retired persons (34 percent of the total) on the board. Board members are municipally appointed in every case and nearly always have five-year terms.

How many employees do you have?

117 responses; 1200 total full-time employees, or an average of 8.5; 148 part-time employees, or an average of 1.3

Thirty-three authorities have at least 10 full-time employees, led by:

MAWC	265
Somerset Municipal Authority	63
Monroeville Municipal Authority	45
Authority of the Borough of Charleroi	38
Moon Township Municipal Authority	35
Southwestern Pa. Water Authority	33
Municipal Authority of the Borough of Oakmont	33
North Fayette County Municipal Authority	31
West Mifflin Sanitary Sewer Municipal Authority	29

At the other extreme, 9 authorities list having one full-time employee and 20 authorities indicate having no full-time employees. Most of those 20 have one to six part-time staff, and some indicate that they have a plant operator on a consulting basis. [NOTE TO BRUCE: Butler Area Sewer Authority says it has no staff; this should be checked.] Several authorities report having no staff at all, including Butler Area, Fallowfield Township, Greensboro-Monongahela, Laurel Highlands, South Strabane Township, Chicora Borough, Marianna-West Bethlehem, and Yough.

What is the average age of your employees?

25-34	2 (2 percent)
35-44	33 (31 percent)
45-54	56 (53 percent)
55-64	14 (13 percent)
65+	1 (1 percent)

Fifty-three percent of those responding indicate that their employees' average age is 45-54 and 14 percent have an average age of at least 55, suggesting a possible need to replace an aging workforce in upcoming years.

Consultants: The great majority of authorities have two consultants: an engineer and a solicitor. Twenty authorities also indicated using auditing or accounting services on a consulting basis. Among a variety of less common responses, one hired a lobbying consultant. Most consultants have been employed for over 10 years. Most are on per-year contracts, but 10 respondents said the average length of a consulting contract is more than 5 years.

Average length of a consultant's contract:

2 years or less	85
2-5 years	3
5 years or more	10

Most important criteria to organizational effectiveness: Respondents were asked to rank seven options in order of importance, with 1 being the highest. The leading responses were efficiency and cost (average score 2.26), environmental protection (2.63), and accountability (3.24), with leadership (3.81), security (4.64), equity (5.11), and economic competitiveness (5.32) trailing. Since most respondents were authority managers and plant operators, these priorities represent their view and not necessarily a cross-section of the general public.

Other selections included customer service (3 times), public health and safety (2 times), and expansion (1 time).

Roles: Among water and combined authorities, 35 of 45 responding to the question indicated that they are involved in treatment; all but one in distribution, and all in billing and administration. With regard to sewage-only authorities, the roles varied more; 50 of 74 (68 percent) handle treatment, 58 of 74 (78 percent) handle collection, and 61 of 74 (82 percent) handle billing and administration.

Type of sewers and overflows: Among sewage authorities, 69 said they have sanitary sewers, 11 have combined sewers, and 8 reported having both. Of the 19 with combined sewers, 17 reported a total of 193 combined sewer overflows (CSOs). The largest numbers:

Greater Greensburg Sewage Authority	37
Municipal Authority of City of McKeesport	28
Blairsville Municipal Authority	20
Mon Valley Sewage Authority	17
Borough of Belle Vernon Municipal Authority	16

Challenges: Authorities completing the page on drinking water were invited to answer the open-ended question, “What are the greatest challenges your organization/authority faces?” All but three of the 45 authorities completing this page had something to say. Infrastructure, financial issues, and regulatory demands were mentioned with approximately equal frequency; the number of comments in each category is hard to count because they so often overlap. Examples of such overlapping comments include:

- Maintaining an aging infrastructure in an area of low economic means with little growth
- Replacing an aging infrastructure, lack of outside funds to do so
- Keeping rates down while complying with regulations
- EPA/DEP regulation (cost of compliance, cost of reporting)

One candid respondent from a combined water-sewer authority admitted that his biggest current challenge was “defending the Authority against the ridiculous notion that multi-national corporations can deliver better drinking water more efficiently or at better rates.”

NOTE, rate and customer stuff still to come!

Then I will do the municipalities survey analysis.