



FARGO WEFMAX
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COVID – What has Stuck Around OWEA Besides the Virus

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OWEA Background

- Founded in 1926
- Over 2,000 members
- Divided into four sections, each with their own governing structure
- Office based in Columbus, Ohio with 3 F/T staff
- In 2021 more than 92 contact hours were offered for operators between the state and sections



OWEA Background - Conference

- Currently OWEA has a joint conference with OAWWA - One Water
 - 2014
 - 2018
 - 2021
 - 2022 and beyond
- In 2020, OWEA was scheduled to have their own conference and due to COVID-19 it was cancelled with very few financial repercussions



OWEA Background - PPP

- OWEA received two rounds of Paycheck Protection Program funding.
- This funding aided in covering staff salaries.
- Both rounds of funding were fully forgiven.



Summary of COVID Changes

- Cancelling/Delay of in person classes
 - Ohio was shut down concerning meetings for part of 2020 and various infection control protocol was implemented by venues per state/local orders.
- Addition of online learning options
 - Ohio has some of the stricter EPA contact hours rules.
 - Go To Webinar is what is used for “live” webinars and requires a polling element and attendance tracking.
- In 2021, the One Water conference was in person and had an online presence
 - Conference Tracker is used for “on demand” conference.
- Online meetings – ZOOM has become our standard vs. conference calls



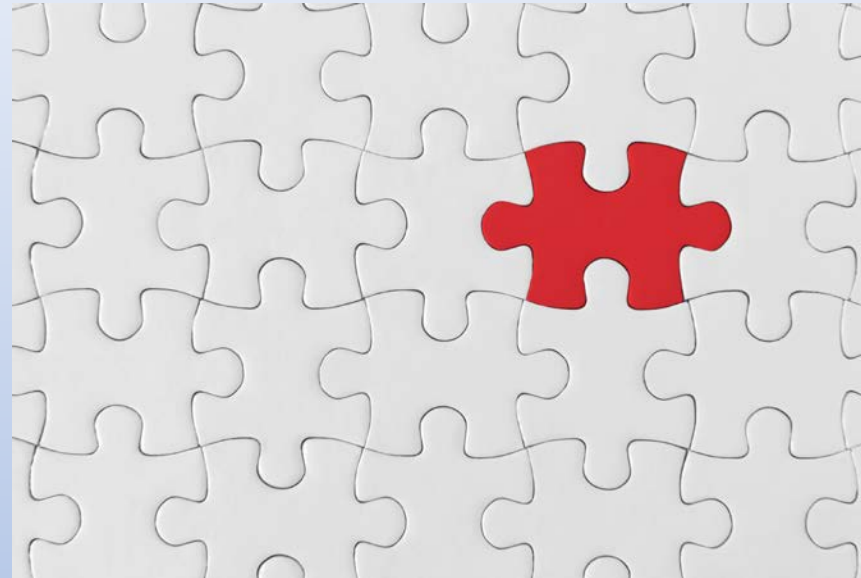
Evaluation of Changes

- Virtual
 - After trial and error, we settled on that no event or meeting will last more than 2.5 hours.
 - This meant EC meetings needed modified.
 - We became very strategic in what was offered virtually from a CHs standpoint.
 - Virtual content isn't the same as in person.



What “Stuck”

- Flexibility
- Online Learning
- Communication
- Partnerships
- Financial
- Contract Review



Flexibility



- Our staff and Executive Committee became very comfortable with the unknown.
- We all learned to pivot.
- We learned to trust each other more.
- We discovered it's okay to modify things while they are in motion.

Online Learning

- OWEA is now in it's second year of monthly webinars with plans to continue.
- These are offered at a very low cost (\$15 each for members).
- We also offered package options which were appealing to municipalities.
 - Bulk discount
 - 6 month
 - 12 month
- Great opportunity to engage sponsors as presenters.
- Profitable
- Makes OWEA more competitive



Communication

- No full EC discussion is done via conference call any longer. Zoom is now used for a better and more productive experience.
- We have had positive feedback from volunteers and EC members on moving shorter meetings to a virtual option and eliminating travel time.
- We continue to communicate with attendees as needed. We provide COVID protocols as requested.



Partnerships

- Due to COVID OWEA developed much stronger partnerships.
 - Ohio EPA
 - The Ohio EPA leaned on OWEA for communications to members and for information.
 - OWEA also surveyed members at OEPA's request.
 - Governor's Office
 - Worked together on COVID surveillance.
 - OAWWA
 - Shared best practices on virtual learning.
 - Vendors
 - Business is given to those who worked with us.



Financial

- COVID made the need for a large reserve VERY OBVIOUS.
 - This resulted in hard conversations and decisions concerning the budget.
- For the first time in recent history the budget team produced a balanced budget for 2022.



Contract Review

- While we have always carefully reviewed contracts, we now require a COVID clause that allows for a transfer of deposits and liabilities to a future date
- A long standing partnership with a conference center that was used for workshops was ended due to lack of flexibility concerning COVID rescheduling



Summary

- COVID created many challenges for MAs, but also opportunities.
- We are much better prepared when there is another COVID like event
- OWEA is actually in a better place financially than Pre-COVID.



