



TRAVERSE CITY  
LIGHT & POWER




FY24/25-28/29

# STRATEGIC PLAN

POWERED BY POSITIVE ENERGY

APRIL 2024

TRAVERSE CITY LIGHT & POWER

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# Introduction

## To Our Strategic Plan

At TCLP, our strategic priorities serve as pillars to support our mission to deliver innovative, sustainable, and community-focused energy and telecom solutions. We recognized them not just for their individual importance but also for their interdependence, as these priorities are designed to work in harmony, ensuring that no single priority outweighs another. Together, they create a balanced and comprehensive strategy that reflects our commitment to excellence, sustainability, and community service.

The purpose of our strategic priorities is twofold. Firstly, they provide a clear direction for our organization, guiding our journey over the next five years. This period will be marked by rapid advancements in technology, evolving community needs, and the ongoing challenge of environmental stewardship. Our priorities are crafted to keep us agile and responsive to these changes, ensuring that we continue to meet and exceed the expectations of those we serve.

Secondly, our strategic objectives within each priority serve as a guiding framework for our annual operating planning. They break down our long-term ambitions into actionable, measurable goals that we can pursue year after year. This approach not only helps us maintain focus and direction but also allows us to track our progress, celebrate our successes, and adjust our strategies as needed to meet emerging challenges and opportunities.

In laying out these strategic priorities and objectives, we are committing to forging a path of continuous improvement, innovation, and community engagement. Each priority and its associated objectives are designed to build upon the strengths of our organization, address areas for growth, and leverage new and existing opportunities to enhance the value we provide to our customers and our community. As we move forward, we do so with a clear vision of where we are headed and a strong foundation to guide our decisions and actions.

Together, we are embarking on a journey to not only achieve our strategic goals but to set new standards of excellence in service, sustainability, and community partnership. Our strategic priorities are more than just a plan; they are a commitment creating a brighter future for all those we serve, and our organization.



Warmly,  
Brandie Ekren,  
Executive Director



# Our Mission and Vision

## Illuminating Our Path Forward

### Mission Statement

To serve as the trusted community partner for delivering innovative, affordable, reliable, and environmentally sustainable energy and telecom solutions.

### Vision Statement

Our vision is to lead with positivity, creating a brighter future for all. As an innovative electric and telecom utility, we harness the power of clean energy and fiber connectivity through sustainable partnerships, services, and programs. We enrich our communities by anticipating and exceeding evolving customer needs with operational excellence.

# Value Statements

## The essence of our corporate culture

	<b>Integrity</b>	Upholding the highest ethical standards of honesty and conduct to ensure the safety and reliability of our services as a testament to our commitment to the customers, community, and stakeholders we serve.
	<b>Sustainability</b>	Embracing environmental stewardship, positive social impact, and economic stability to ensure a thriving planet and prosperous communities.
	<b>Innovation</b>	Embracing change and pioneering forward-thinking solutions to meet the future head-on.
	<b>Collaboration</b>	Fostering inclusive partnerships and teamwork, uniting diverse perspectives to achieve common goals, and build stronger connected and energized communities.
	<b>Optimism</b>	Fostering a positive outlook as we navigate challenges and seize opportunities.





# Our Strategic Foundation

## The Purpose Behind Our Mission, Vision, and Values

The strategic foundation of TCLP is anchored in our Mission, Vision, and Values, which collectively serve as our guiding star, illuminating our path forward in a dynamic and evolving landscape. These foundational elements are more than just statements; they are a reflection of our identity, our aspirations, and our commitment to the community we serve.

Together, our Mission, Vision, and Values create a coherent framework that informs our strategic decisions, shapes our organizational culture, and defines our approach to challenges and opportunities. They serve as a compass, guiding us towards achieving our goals while staying true to our principles and the communities we are privileged to serve.



# Strategic Priority

Commitment To Our Future And Those We Serve



## Community Enrichment

Embrace the benefits of public power for current and future generations by fostering a vibrant and thriving community, as an invested civic partner fueling economic growth and sustainable development.

### Strategic Objectives

- 1. Strengthen Partnerships with Community, Customers & Local Organizations:** Establish collaborative projects that address community needs, leverage local expertise, and share resources for broader impact.
- 2. Increase Community Outreach and Volunteer Efforts:** Organize and participate in community service and volunteer programs that support local initiatives, to enhance TCLP's impact on making a positive contribution to community well-being.
- 3. Enhance Community Educational Programs & Environmental Sustainability Initiatives:** Develop and deliver educational programs focused on environmental sustainability, clean energy, and the benefits of fiber connectivity through engaging schools, community centers, and online platforms.
- 4. Seek Mutually Beneficial Infrastructure and Technological Investments:** Pursue infrastructure projects and technological investments that offer long-term benefits to the community, such as expanding fiber connectivity to underserved areas and investing in renewable energy sources.



# Strategic Priority

Commitment To Our Future And Those We Serve

# 2



## Customer Experience

Elevate the customer experience by delivering unparalleled service quality, introducing cutting-edge, customer-driven offerings, and fostering seamless, engaging interactions across all digital and physical touchpoints.

### Strategic Objectives

- 1. Improve Customer Service Quality and Responsiveness:** Enhance response times and customer satisfaction scores through targeted service improvements and staff training.
- 2. Expand and Create New Innovative Customer Programs and Service Offerings:** Introduce new programs and services that meet and exceed evolving customer needs, with a focus on sustainability and digital connectivity.
- 3. Increase Community Engagement in Sustainability & Fiber Initiatives:** Increase awareness and grow community participation within TCLP's sustainability and fiber connectivity efforts through outreach and engagement activities.
- 4. Enhance Customer Outreach and Programs:** Implement comprehensive outreach strategies to ensure customers are well informed and can easily access TCLP's programs and services.
- 5. Strengthen Digital Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:** Develop and enhance digital platforms to improve the interactive customer experience, increase engagement, and ease feedback collection.
- 6. Promote Educational Initiatives and Personalized Services:** Launch educational campaigns on the benefits of sustainability and fiber connectivity by introducing personalized service offerings to enhance customer relevance and engagement.



# Strategic Priority

Commitment To Our Future And Those We Serve

# 3



## Employee Excellence

Cultivate a high-performing, collaborative, and versatile team that excels in their current roles and is equipped to handle future challenges and opportunities.

### Strategic Objectives

- 1. Elevate Skill Proficiency and Role Excellence:** Develop targeted professional development programs that enhance key competencies and technical skills relevant to both current roles and future industry trends, ensuring the TCLP team is well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities ahead.
- 2. Foster a Culture of Continuous Learning and Adaptability:** Implement initiatives that promote lifelong learning, encourage flexibility, and support the TCLP team in adapting to new technologies, methodologies, and industry shifts, reinforcing a culture that values growth and resilience.
- 3. Boost Team Engagement and Satisfaction:** Create and maintain an engaging, supportive work environment that prioritizes the well-being and job satisfaction of every team member, aiming to increase overall engagement, reduce turnover, and attract talent.
- 4. Cultivate Leadership and Succession Readiness:** Establish a comprehensive leadership development and succession planning program to identify and prepare potential leaders within our team, ensuring a seamless transition continuity in key roles, and maintaining excellent customer service.
- 5. Implement Effective Change Management Practices:** Develop and execute a robust change management framework that equips our team to navigate organizational changes with confidence, ensuring they are ready to embrace new challenges, and contribute to TCLP's evolving success.



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# Strategic Priority

Commitment To Our Future And Those We Serve

# 4



## Operational & Financial Excellence

Drive excellence and resilience in energy and telecom operations with innovative technologies and practices, prioritizing safety, reliability, and responsiveness to TCLP customers. Bolster TCLP's financial resilience by strategically diversifying revenue streams and enhancing financial management practices.

### Strategic Objectives

- 1. Maintain Benchmark Designations for Best-in-Class Service:** Uphold and secure benchmark designations from the American Public Power Association (APPA) and other relevant bodies, affirming TCLP's leadership in operational reliability, safety, and customer satisfaction. This reflects TCLP's unwavering commitment to excellence, positioning them as the energy and telecom provider of choice.
- 2. Bolster Financial Resilience through Strategic Management:** Utilize robust financial strategies to maintain TCLP's excellent credit rating and ensure financial agility. By implementing safeguards against market volatilities, enabling strategic investments in growth and innovation.
- 3. Diversify and Grow Sustainable Revenue Streams:** Actively explore and develop new, sustainable business models and high-value customer services that align with our mission and provide ample diversification to ensure TCLP's financial resilience and commitment to support community-focused initiatives and enhance value for all stakeholders.
- 4. Invest in Infrastructure and Smart Technology Integration:** Commit to the continuous upgrade of TCLP energy and telecom infrastructure with smart technologies. Maintaining a focus on investments to improve operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and reliability, that keeps TCLP at the forefront of industry evolution.
- 5. Cultivate a Culture of Continuous Improvement and Adaptability:** Foster an organizational culture that values continuous learning, innovation, and adaptability. Encourage all team members to engage in continuous operational improvement initiatives, adopt best practices, and embrace change, ensuring TCLP remains dynamic and responsive to evolving customer needs, industry trends, and challenges.



# Strategic Priority

Commitment To Our Future And Those We Serve

# 5

## Technology Transition



Embrace and integrate cutting-edge technologies to spearhead a culture of innovation within TCLP. Focus on strategic investments in new technological solutions, engaging in rigorous research and development, and forging strategic partnerships that drive organizational growth. Aim to deliver innovative customer-centric services and solutions that not only bolster revenue growth but also position TCLP as a pioneer in utility sector technology and service excellence.

### Strategic Objectives

- 1. Implement New Technological Solutions to Enhance Service Value:** Identify and respond to emerging customer needs and market trends by creating and introducing innovative services and programs that leverage advanced technologies, to enhance customer experience and operational excellence.
- 2. Boost Annual R&D Investment for Continuous Innovation:** Prioritize a progressive increase in R&D investment each year, focusing on strategic areas to ensure TCLP remains at the forefront of operational efficiency, environmental sustainability, and the development of customer-centric services.
- 3. Forge Strategic Partnerships for Technological Excellence:** Establish collaborative relationships with industry leaders, technology innovators, and research institutions to co-develop forward-thinking solutions, driving TCLP and the community towards a future of technology adoption and utility sector innovation.



# Strategic Priority

Commitment To Our Future And Those We Serve



## Environmental Sustainability

Lead in comprehensive environmental sustainability by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and advancing towards 100% renewable energy usage by 2040. Expand TCLP's commitment to include the preservation of all natural resources, adopting and promoting practices that ensure the sustainable management of air, water, and land. Through innovative initiatives and strategic partnerships, TCLP will set industry benchmarks in holistic environmental stewardship, extending its impact beyond energy and telecom operations to foster a healthy planet and sustainable future for its community and stakeholders.

### Strategic Objectives

- 1. Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Implement initiatives aimed at significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with the goal of achieving 100% renewable energy usage by 2040. Implement operationalizing tactics and initiatives identified within the Climate Action Plan, which include but are not limited to clean energy resource acquisition, innovative rate designs, customer programs and integrated resource planning.
- 2. Pioneer Innovative Environmental Initiatives:** Develop and introduce environmental initiatives beyond those identified in the Climate Action Plan to establish TCLP as a corporate leader in sustainability practices.
- 3. Drive Environmental Sustainability in TCLP Operations and Energy Usage:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from TCLP's operations, facilities and fleet through strategic investments in clean technologies and practices.



# Strategic Landscape

Commitment to our future and those we serve



## SWOT Analysis

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

TCLP's strengths lie in its community engagement, financial health, and green leadership. Identified opportunities exist in leveraging technology, capitalizing on supportive policies, and embracing renewable energy trends. However, challenges in communication, staff retention, and adapting to a modern business mindset are recognized as areas for improvement. Identified external threats include market forces, technological advancements, competition, and potential misinformation.



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# Strategic Landscape

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- 1. Community Engagement and Public Power:** TCLP is recognized for its strong community ties, reliability, and friendliness.
- 2. Customer Relationships:** Strong customer engagement and responsiveness.
- 3. Innovative Staff:** A forward-thinking, capable, and proactive workforce.
- 4. Financial Health:** Competitive rates and strong financial standing.
- 5. Green Leadership:** A leader in environmental sustainability and climate policy.

### Weaknesses

- 1. Communication and Public Presence:** Improve communication strategies and public engagement.
- 2. Modern Business Mindset:** Transition to a more retail-oriented approach, especially for fiber and CAP programs.
- 3. Staff Overload and Retention:** Address the pressure on staff and ensure growth opportunities and knowledge retention.
- 4. Energy Portfolio Diversification:** Need to diversify energy sources and reduce reliance on non-renewables.

### Opportunities

- 1. Leveraging Unique Assets:** Utilize the staff's capabilities, the community-owned aspect, and technological assets like smart grids and fiber.
- 2. Digitalization and Technology:** Expand digital customer interfaces and technological advancements.
- 3. Federal and State Policies:** Capitalize on policies supporting energy transformation.
- 4. Renewable Energy Trends:** Embrace the shift towards renewable energy and distributed generation.

### Threats

- 1. External Market Forces:** Rising energy costs and potential political shifts affecting funding.
- 2. Skilled Labor Shortage:** Addressing the lack of skilled labor for specific tasks.
- 3. Technological Challenges:** Keeping pace with rapid technological changes and cybersecurity threats.
- 4. Competitive Landscape:** Competition from other ISPs and utilities.
- 5. Misinformation and Resistance:** Combatting misinformation and resistance from special interest groups.



# Strategic Landscape

## PEST Analysis

*Political, Economical, Sociocultural, Technological*

# P

### Political

#### Government Policies and Legislation

TCLP's operations could be impacted by future government policies related to renewable energy, energy waste reduction, and electrification. Legislative changes could either favor municipal utilities like TCLP or bring challenges, such as increased regulation or mandates for renewable energy adoption.

#### Political Relationships

Establishing strong relationships with local and state representatives could benefit TCLP, particularly in influencing future decisions and policies.

#### Local and National Political Trends

Changes in political parties at the state or national level could affect funding opportunities and regulatory environments.

# E

### Economical

#### Inflation and Interest Rates

Rising costs and interest rates could impact customer participation in energy waste reduction and electrification programs. TCLP's financial position could be affected by these macroeconomic factors.

#### Economic Disparities

Economic shifts in the community, such as displacement of low-income citizens, could alter revenue streams and customer expectations.

#### Market Fluctuations

The utility industry's dynamics, including energy market prices and regulatory environments, could impact TCLP's operations and decision-making.

# S

### Sociocultural

#### Environmental and Climate Awareness

Increasing public awareness of climate change and environmental stewardship pressures TCLP to accelerate sustainability efforts.

#### Community Expectations

The community's values and beliefs about renewable energy and carbon neutrality could shape TCLP's strategic direction.

#### Cultural Trends and Workforce Dynamics

Societal trends, such as the shift towards remote work and increasing environmental consciousness, could influence TCLP's workforce policies and public engagement strategies.

# T

### Technological

#### Operational Efficiencies through Technology

Advancements in technology could enhance TCLP's operational efficiencies, data management, and renewable project integration.

#### Automation and AI

The adoption of automation and artificial intelligence could streamline tasks, reduce errors, and provide real-time data for analysis.

#### Innovative Energy Technologies

Emerging technologies like vehicle-to-grid systems, smart energy management, and AI in customer service provision present opportunities for TCLP to stay at the forefront of the utility sector.



# Strategic Landscape

## Strategic SWOT & PEST Analysis Recommendations

### SWOT Recommendations

- 1. Enhance Communication:** Develop robust communication strategies to engage the public effectively.
- 2. Strategic Partnerships:** Build partnerships for skill development, technological advancement, and renewable energy projects.
- 3. Embrace Technological Advancements:** Invest in modern technologies and digital interfaces for customer interaction.
- 4. Diversify Energy Portfolio:** Prioritize renewable energy sources and reduce dependency on non-renewables.
- 5. Educational Initiatives:** Increase efforts in public and customer education to combat misinformation, build awareness and ease adoption of TCLP's initiatives and goals.
- 6. Staff Development and Retention:** Implement workforce development and succession planning to ensure talent retention and growth.
- 7. Adapt to Market Changes:** Stay agile and responsive to the changing energy landscape and customer needs.

### PEST Recommendations

- 1. Political Engagement and Advocacy:** Actively engage in policy discussions and advocacy to influence favorable legislative outcomes.
- 2. Economic Adaptability:** Develop flexible strategies to adapt to economic changes, focusing on affordability and efficiency.
- 3. Community Engagement & Public Power:** Enhance efforts to educate and involve the community in sustainability initiatives, aligning TCLP's goals with public values.
- 5. Workforce Development:** Adapt to cultural trends by investing in workforce development, ensuring staff are equipped for future challenges.
- 6. Technology Integration:** Prioritize investment in new technologies to improve efficiency, customer service, and integration of renewable energy sources.
- 7. Monitoring Emerging Trends:** Continuously monitor political, economic, sociocultural, and technological trends to anticipate and prepare for future challenges and opportunities.



# Strategic Planning

## Key Elements of Our Strategic Planning Framework



### Landscape

Reports & SWOT/PEST

Industry and functional environment  
that impacts performance



### Foundation

Mission, Vision & Values

What brings us together at the  
highest level



### Response

Priorities, Goals & Objectives

How we will proceed and make  
decisions based on our strategic  
landscape and strategic foundation



### Execution

Change Management,  
KPI's/OKRs & Reports

Tactics and measurement for success





# Strategic Planning

## The Process Behind Our Strategic Plan



### Assessing Current Strategy

- **Operational:** Did we accomplish what we set out?
- **Thematic:** Are these the right priorities and strategies?
- **SWOT/PEST:** Strengths, Weaknesses, Aspirations, Opportunities, Threats & Results



### Industry Landscape

- Climate Action Plan
- Strategic Marketing & Communications
- Business Model & Workforce Readiness Assessment



### Facilitated Discussion

- In person & off-site
- Mindful centering
- **Strategic Foundation:** (Mission, Vision & Values)
- **Strategic Response:** Priorities, Goals & Objectives
- Next Steps



### Document Drafting

- Developing draft ahead of" or before "Facilitated Discussion"
- Finalize complete document for formal approval



### Approval and Implementation

- Board meeting approval
- Roll-out & plan for implementation and tracking progress
- Business metrics
- Change management



# Strategic Planning

## Timeline: Of Tasks

- Strategic Landscape
- Current Strategy Assessment
- Updating Strategic Plan
- Approval & Implementation

CAP Complete						
		Strategic Marketing & Communications Complete				
Business Model & Workforce Readiness (TCLP Tomorrow)						
		Strategic Planning Survey, Interviews, Staff Discussions				
				Drafted Updated Strategic Plan		
Jul'23	Aug'23	Sept'23	Oct'23	Nov'23	Dec'23	




Business Model & Workforce Readiness (TCLP Tomorrow)						
Strategic Planning Survey, Interviews, Staff Discussions						
Drafted Updated Strategic Plan						
Board Retreat						
		New Strategic Plan Approved		Implementation of Strategic Initiatives		
Jan'24	Feb'24	Mar'24	Apr'24	May'24	Jun'24	





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