

A background image of a water treatment facility with large blue pipes and white water splashing. The image has a blue tint.

FROST & SULLIVAN

2024 Excellence in Water Resourcefulness Award:

Greenville Water,
South Carolina

Introduction

Greenville Water demonstrates how strategic technology use and efficient operations can bring significant benefits. Their long-term partnership with Itron has played a key role in achieving these results.

Overcoming Water Challenges through Meter Modernization and Affordability

Growing cities require dependable and efficient water supply. Greenville Water is experiencing rapid expansion, gaining over four hundred new accounts each month. This swift growth, along with the challenges of managing a mid-sized municipality with 194,000 accounts, risks straining resources, increasing operational costs, and impacting service quality. Furthermore, water affordability remains a concern, as water and sewer bills have seen a 54.8% increase between 2012 and 2023.

A proactive infrastructure modernization strategy, supported by a two-decade partnership with Itron, has allowed Greenville Water to overcome potential challenges. Greenville Water has shown the possibility of managing a highly efficient water system that can provide both high quality drinking water, while maintaining incredibly low costs as well as minimizing environmental impacts.

Their commitment to affordability in the face of rising national costs underscores their dedication to customer well-being. This has been further solidified by their AAA bond ratings from all three major credit rating agencies (Moody's, S&P, and Fitch), a testament to their financial prudence and stability.

Frost & Sullivan recognizes Greenville Water as the 2024 Excellence in Resourcefulness for Water recipient for its community-oriented water quality and operational efficiency programs.



The table below lists the criteria for measuring Greenville Water’s success for water resourcefulness.

SOCIAL IMPACT	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Delivering Advanced Technology Driven Resource Management				✓
Resource Conscious Program				✓
Enhancing Overall Customer Experience and Engagement for Resourcefulness				✓
BUSINESS IMPACT	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Well-Drafted Vision for Implementing a Technology Oriented Resourcefulness Strategy				✓
Achieving Operational Efficiencies				✓
Enhances the Utility’s Profile as Pioneer and Proponent of Sustainability				✓

Nestled near the Appalachian Mountains and the major metropolitan cities of Atlanta and Charlotte, the City of Greenville can best be described as an idyllic, community-oriented, blissful, and fast-growing city. The municipal water utility, Greenville Water, has been exhibiting historic growth these past several years. It has been adding over four hundred new accounts per month. It is home to 40+ Fortune 500 companies, including BMW, Lockheed Martin, and Michelin, to name a few.

Societal Impact

Greenville Water demonstrates a strong commitment to its community through efficient water resource management and client-driven initiatives.

Delivering Advanced Technology-Driven Resource Management

The utility’s highly efficient water infrastructure, refined in part through its partnership with Itron, ensures reliable and high-quality drinking water. This is demonstrated by awards such as the American Water Works Association (AWWA) 2024 Exemplary Source Water Protection Award.

The award acknowledges Greenville Water's outstanding, multi-faceted approach to safeguarding the community's water supply. The approach included robust stakeholder collaboration with South Carolina Department of Environmental Services, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District. The company uses drone and environmental DNA analysis for continuous source water monitoring, in addition to conducting over 10,000 water quality tests annually.

Additionally, Greenville Water actively participates in forums such as the Water Customer Care Forum, where they lead discussions on critical topics such as PFAS and lead service line management, clearly displaying their commitment to public health and safety.

Resource-Conscious Program

Greenville Water dedication to resourcefulness is clear in its ability to keep non-revenue water under 14 percent. This clearly indicates effective conservation and leak detection efforts and the importance of minimizing waste. The utility holds a long history of protecting water sources. This includes their conservation easement in 1993 with the Nature Conservancy, which legally protects 30,000 acres of watersheds of the North Saluda and Table Rock Reservoirs.

Furthermore, by significantly reducing the number of truck rolls, they have actively reduced carbon emissions, contributing positively to environmental sustainability and community well-being.

Enhancing Overall Customer Experience and Engagement for Resourcefulness

A key benefit for customers is the remarkably low average monthly bill rate of just \$12, one of the lowest in the country. This affordability directly enhances customer experience. It has implemented a one-day read to bill window and streamlined the billing process, all contributing to a smooth and positive customer interaction. Beyond efficiency, Greenville Water prioritizes direct customer input, by regularly conducting focus groups and town meetings. Topics focus on unmet customer needs, ensuring that services are continuously tailored to community requirements. Other initiatives include "Our Water Story" exhibit at the Roper Mountain Science Center. The center is designed to educate the community about water resources.



Business Impact

Greenville Water's operational excellence, strategic vision, and sound governance have solidified its position as a leader in the utility sector.

Well-Drafted Vision for Implementing a Technology Oriented Resourcefulness Strategy

The more than 20-year collaboration with Itron underscores a clear and consistent vision for leveraging technology to modernize critical infrastructure. This long-term partnership has laid the foundation for a 21st century, agile water network, proving that proactive technology strategy is key to sustained growth and efficiency. This vision is supported by an organizational structure where all departments collectively reach consensus on how to best serve their customers, ensuring a unified and customer centric strategic direction.

Achieving Operational Efficiencies

The utility has exhibited exceptional operational efficiencies through initiatives such as one-day read to bill to cycle, maintaining low non-revenue water ratings, and reducing truck rolls. These efficiencies have led to cost savings and resource optimization. Their AAA bond rating highlights strong financial health and stability, enabling favorable borrowing and investments and benefiting the overall community of Greenville.

Enhances the Utility's Profile as Pioneer and Proponent of Sustainability

Greenville Water commitment and accolades for water protection and efficiency, highlights its leadership in environmental stewardship. It has garnered respect in forums such as Water Customer Care forum for its thought leadership related to PFAS, lead service, staff retention, and component sourcing.

Conclusion

Greenville Water deserves recognition for excellence in resourcefulness due to its comprehensive approach to managing vital water resources. Through its two-decade partnership with Itron, it has achieved unparalleled operational efficiencies, maintaining remarkably low customer costs and non-revenue water stats. Its initiative-taking conservation efforts, robust financial stewardship, and deep community engagement demonstrate a sustainable model for water utilities, effectively balancing growth with environmental responsibility and customer well-being.

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