

2016-25

Publication Date
October 12, 2016

Stakeholders
Municipal Securities
Dealers, Municipal
Advisors, Issuers,
Investors, General
Public

Notice Type
Request for Comment

Comment Deadline
November 11, 2016

MSRB Seeks Input on Strategic Priorities

Overview

The Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (MSRB) engages in a formal strategic planning process to ensure that decisions regarding its priorities and resource allocation are informed by an analysis of market risks, trends, enforcement actions and other developments. As part of its next strategic planning cycle, which begins in January 2017, the MSRB is seeking public input on its long-term priorities to help guide the strategic direction of the organization. Comments are due by November 11, 2016.

Background and Regulatory Justification

The MSRB protects investors, state and local governments, and other municipal entities, and the public interest by promoting a fair and efficient municipal securities market. The MSRB fulfills this mission by regulating the municipal securities firms, banks and municipal advisors that engage in municipal securities and advisory activities. To further protect market participants, the MSRB provides market transparency through its Electronic Municipal Market Access (EMMA®)¹ website, the official repository for information on all municipal bonds. The MSRB also serves as an objective resource on the municipal market, conducts extensive education and outreach to market stakeholders, and provides market leadership on key issues. The MSRB is a Congressionally-chartered, self-regulatory organization governed by a 21-member board of directors that has a majority of public members, in addition to representatives of regulated entities. The MSRB is subject to oversight by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Examination and enforcement activities related to MSRB rules are conducted by the SEC, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority and bank regulators. The MSRB provides resources and a disclosure venue, EMMA, for municipal entities and obligated persons, but does not regulate them and has no jurisdiction over their activities.



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¹ EMMA® is a registered trademark of the MSRB.

Strategic Planning

To ensure that the MSRB appropriately undertakes initiatives consistent with its mission, the Board of Directors periodically engages in a comprehensive strategy review based on multiple inputs related to the municipal securities market. The Board's planning process includes consideration of the statutory obligations of the MSRB; activities of brokers, dealers, municipal securities dealers and municipal advisors; information needs and concerns of investors, municipal entities and obligated persons; and market research and practices. The MSRB's strategic planning process significantly benefits from input from a wide range of market stakeholders.

Request for Comment

The MSRB is seeking public comment regarding its long-term priorities and initiatives as they relate to core activities and strategic goals. Note that these strategic goals are in addition to what is considered baseline responsibilities or activities of the organization. Please see these activities and goals listed below.

Core MSRB activities are:

- Regulating municipal securities dealers and municipal advisors;
- Operating market transparency systems; and
- Providing education, outreach and market leadership.

MSRB current strategic goals are to:

- Implement regulatory requirements and standards for all professionals providing municipal advisory services;
- Enhance access to, and understanding of, market information by municipal entities and obligated persons;
- Create and tailor rules and guidance that support a fair and efficient marketplace; and
- Develop and improve municipal market transparency, market information and tools available for use by investors and others.

Commenters should provide feedback on potential areas where the MSRB should focus its strategic goals in the coming year(s), and how the MSRB should prioritize its core activities. Comments should address existing or new issues of particular interest and what, if any, additional issues should be considered.

When providing feedback, the MSRB encourages commenters to be as specific as possible and provide relevant data and information about particular issues and topics.

Commenters may wish to consider responding to any or all of the following questions:

1. What do commenters consider the most important issues, risks or challenges in the municipal market, and how might the MSRB, within the scope of its authority, address them?
2. Should any of the MSRB's statutory mandates—protecting municipal securities investors, protecting issuers and other municipal entities, promoting market fairness and efficiency, and providing market transparency—be emphasized in any particular way in the next planning period?
3. With respect to municipal advisor regulation, which has been a focus of recent years, are there areas that stakeholders believe warrant additional consideration by the MSRB?
4. Given the MSRB's mandate to protect municipal entities, which, in addition to municipal issuers, includes 529 college savings plans, ABLE program sponsors, government and local investment pools, and public pension plans, are there specific strategies the MSRB should consider with respect to the unique aspects of these non-municipal issuer entities?
5. Are there specific topics that the MSRB should address in its education program? What are the most effective ways to reach and educate market stakeholders?

This year, the MSRB is also seeking specific input on future development of its EMMA website.

6. The EMMA website is used by a broad range of market participants. What steps could the MSRB consider taking to maximize the benefit of EMMA to investors, municipal entities and other market participants? What do commenters believe are the highest priorities in efforts to continue to increase EMMA's value?

Comments should be submitted no later than November 11, 2016 and may be submitted in electronic or paper form. [Comments may be submitted electronically by clicking here.](#) Comments submitted in paper form should be sent to Ronald W. Smith, Corporate Secretary, Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board, 1300 I Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington DC 20005. All comments will be available for public inspection on the MSRB's website.

Questions about this notice should be directed to Beth Wolfe, Chief Financial Officer, at 202-838-1308.

Decisions about the MSRB's strategic priorities and specific initiatives remain the purview of the MSRB Board of Directors, which is responsible for ensuring that the MSRB fulfills its statutory mandate to promote a fair and efficient municipal market. It is also the Board's responsibility to balance competing priorities within its statutory mandate, regulatory authority and resource limitations, while managing associated financial, operational and reputational risks.

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