



PHOTO BY BEN ROMANG

Prairie Engineers



Prairie Engineers, a woman-owned firm, was founded in 2010 and has grown to 70 people and eight offices. Headquartered in Columbia, Illinois, the firm also has offices in Springfield, Peoria, Hillsboro and Champaign, along with Hazelwood, Missouri, and Keokuk, Iowa, plus a recent addition in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

"Prairie Engineers is a team of forward-thinking engineers, surveyors and scientists solving problems for agencies that improve and preserve public works across the United States," said Lisa Kramer, president and founder of Prairie Engineers. "We work primarily for federal and state governments, utilities and industry providing services including surveying and mapping; civil site, transportation and water resources engineering; and structural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineering."

As a relatively young firm with a vision for growth, Prairie Engineers recognized the need to offer exceptional benefits and opportunities to attract the best and most talented engineers, surveyors and scientists. "We have invested heavily in growing the right group of employees with the right attitude," said Kramer. "We are disciplined about what clients we serve, and we serve them well, which makes our work lives easier and our employees can enjoy a sense of accomplishment."

Over the past 12 years, Prairie Engineers has been successful in recruiting qualified engineers. "Flexibility is a word that defines us, with policies in place to encourage work-life balance and mentoring at all career levels so that employees can grow to their fullest potential," said Kramer. "We have allowed our staff to work remotely since well before COVID-19 came along, we share half of our profits with our staff each year, we offer more paid time off than most and we offer fully employer-paid medical insurance for our staff members."

In the past year, Prairie Engineers added 20 staff members and opened its first office outside of the Midwest. The firm worked on some notable projects, including the completion of a boundary survey of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio and started a new boundary survey of Joint Base Andrews, a military facility in Maryland where Air Force One is hangared.

The firm also had several projects in the Springfield area. "We completed design work for mechanical upgrades at Camp Lincoln in Springfield for the Illinois National Guard and started working on plumbing renovations at UIS, both through the Illinois Capital Development Board," said Kramer. "We started the design of intersection improvements at the Sangamon Avenue and Dirksen Parkway

intersection in Springfield for the Illinois Department of Transportation."

Prairie Engineers reorganized its management structure in 2021 to better focus on company priorities, most notably their clients and employees.

"As we have grown over the last 10 years from a one-person company to a very diverse 70-person company with eight offices, we have grown our talents and offerings along the way," said Kramer. "We recognized the need for better mentoring of our staff and divided them into technical discipline groups focusing on our technical practices of infrastructure engineering, facilities engineering and geospatial."

The company also recognized the need to better understand and respond to clients and organized its business development and project management functions into four market groups – federal government, state and local government, departments of transportation, and utilities and industry.

This new organizational structure has served Prairie Engineering well over the past year and has enabled further growth of the company.

"We plan to continue growing both in size and geography to continue offering our employees challenging projects they can be proud to work on."