

BUILDING BLOCKS OF TRUST

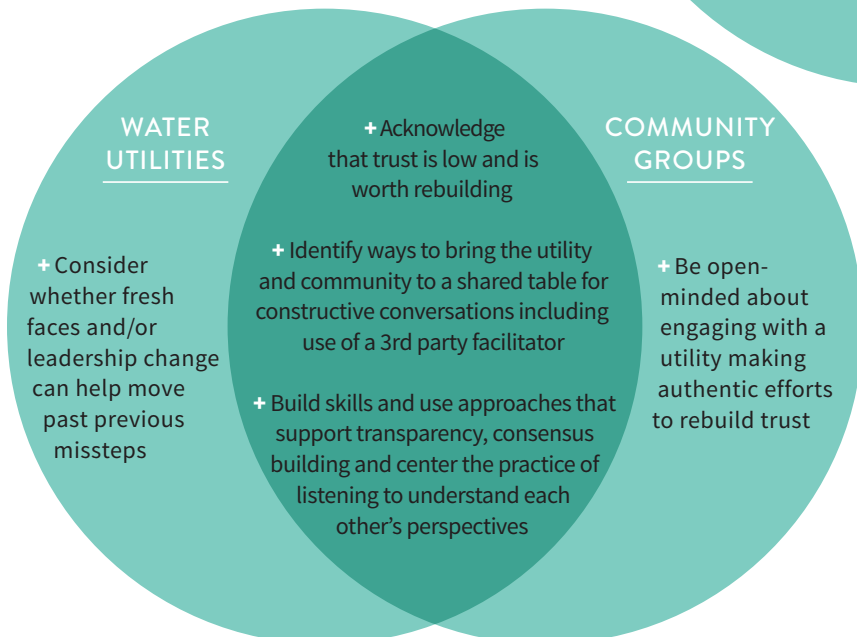
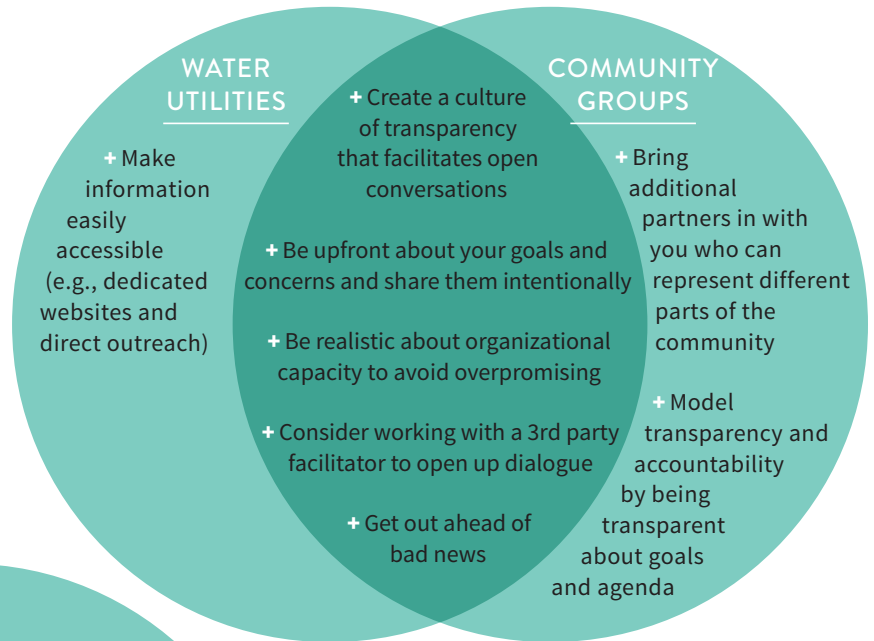


CREATING AUTHENTIC AND EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND WATER UTILITIES

To achieve **equitable and sustainable water systems** and **increased public investment in water infrastructure**, **strong and authentic relationships between local community groups and water utilities, built on trust** are critical. [River Network](#) and the [WaterNow Alliance](#) went to community organizations and water utilities around the country who have formed successful partnerships to **learn what it takes**. In *Building Blocks of Trust: Creating Authentic and Equitable Relationships Between Community Organizations and Water Utilities*, we share what we learned from these successful partnerships and hope that **you can use their lessons learned to catalyze even more of these vital partnerships for healthier rivers and communities**.



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PRIORITIZING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR RESTORING COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE

WATER UTILITIES

- + Water utilities provide opportunities to learn more about utility operations (e.g. provide tours of utility facilities and hold utility open houses)
- + Create a citizens' academy to educate community members on how the utility works

- + Include community members on utility boards and water utility staff on nonprofit boards and advisory committees

COMMUNITY GROUPS

- + Community groups take time to learn about the water utility and its operations
- + Be empathetic to challenges facing utilities
- + Conduct outreach to utilities in ways that recognize they are juggling lots of competing interests



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR DEEPENING COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF UTILITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR HIGHLIGHTING SHARED GOALS TO LEVERAGE MUTUAL BENEFITS

WATER UTILITIES

- + Consider utility goals and objectives broadly to identify ways the utility could benefit from working with community organizations

- + Identify shared outcomes between utility and community group
- + Find ways the utility and community group can contribute to achieving those shared goals by identifying, leveraging and contributing respective expertise and experience
- + Look for funding, strategies, or other opportunities available because of this mutually beneficial relationship that might not be available otherwise

COMMUNITY GROUPS

- + Assess community goals and identify how working with the water utility can be mutually beneficial

WATER UTILITIES

- + Identify and promote existing opportunities for community members to inform utility decision making processes
- + Establish community-based advisory councils

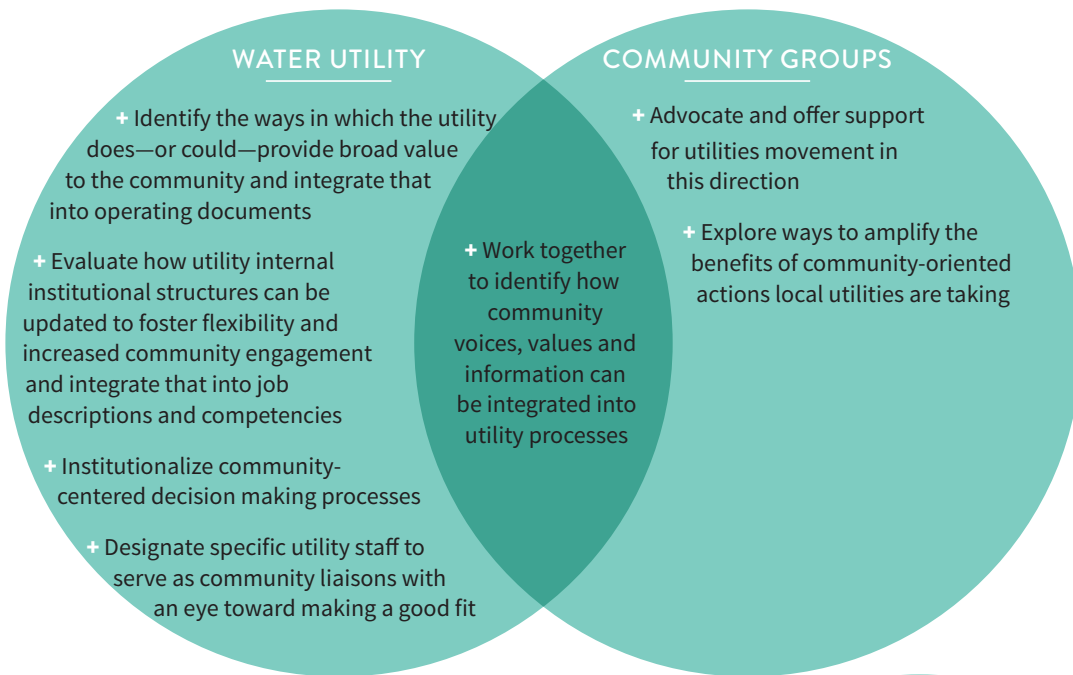
- + Create mechanisms where they don't exist and be clear about their purpose, for example supporting or engaging in Community-Led Research
- + Be creative and inclusive in engagement approaches to allow for a variety of schedules and styles to facilitate engagement by underrepresented community members

COMMUNITY GROUPS

- + Identify and support community members interested in serving on utility boards and committees



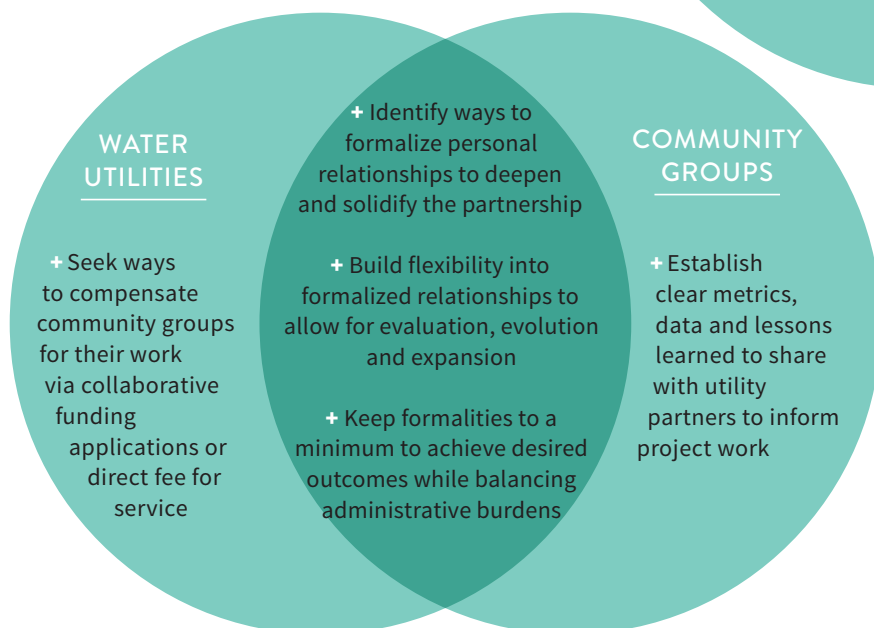
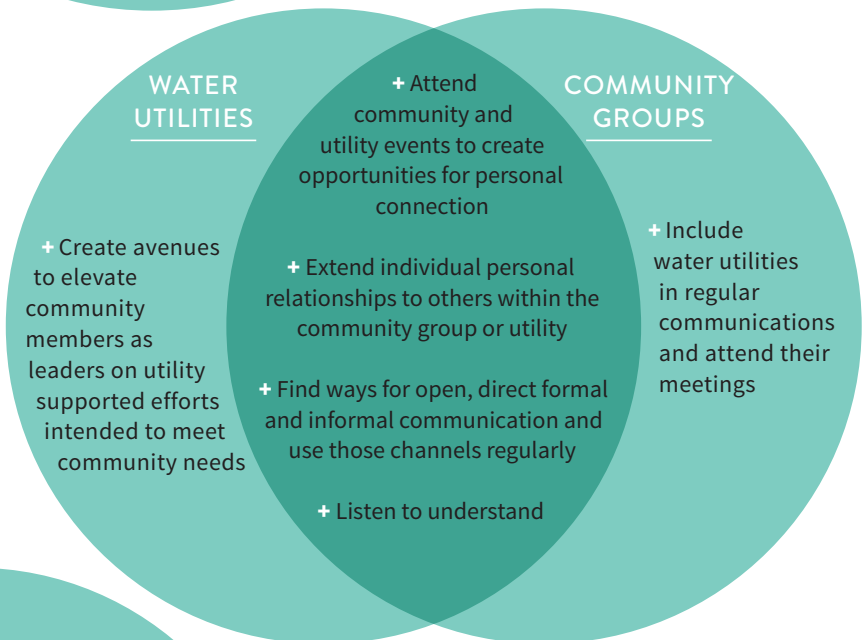
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR INCLUDING THE COMMUNITY AS PART OF UTILITY DECISION MAKING



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR ADOPTING A COMMUNITY-FACING ORIENTATION



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CULTIVATING LONG-TERM COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH INTENTION



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BUILDING FROM PERSONAL TO MORE FORMALIZED RELATIONSHIPS