RIPPLES OF CHANGE

GUIDELINES & TEMPLATES FOR BUILDING YOUR OWN COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY

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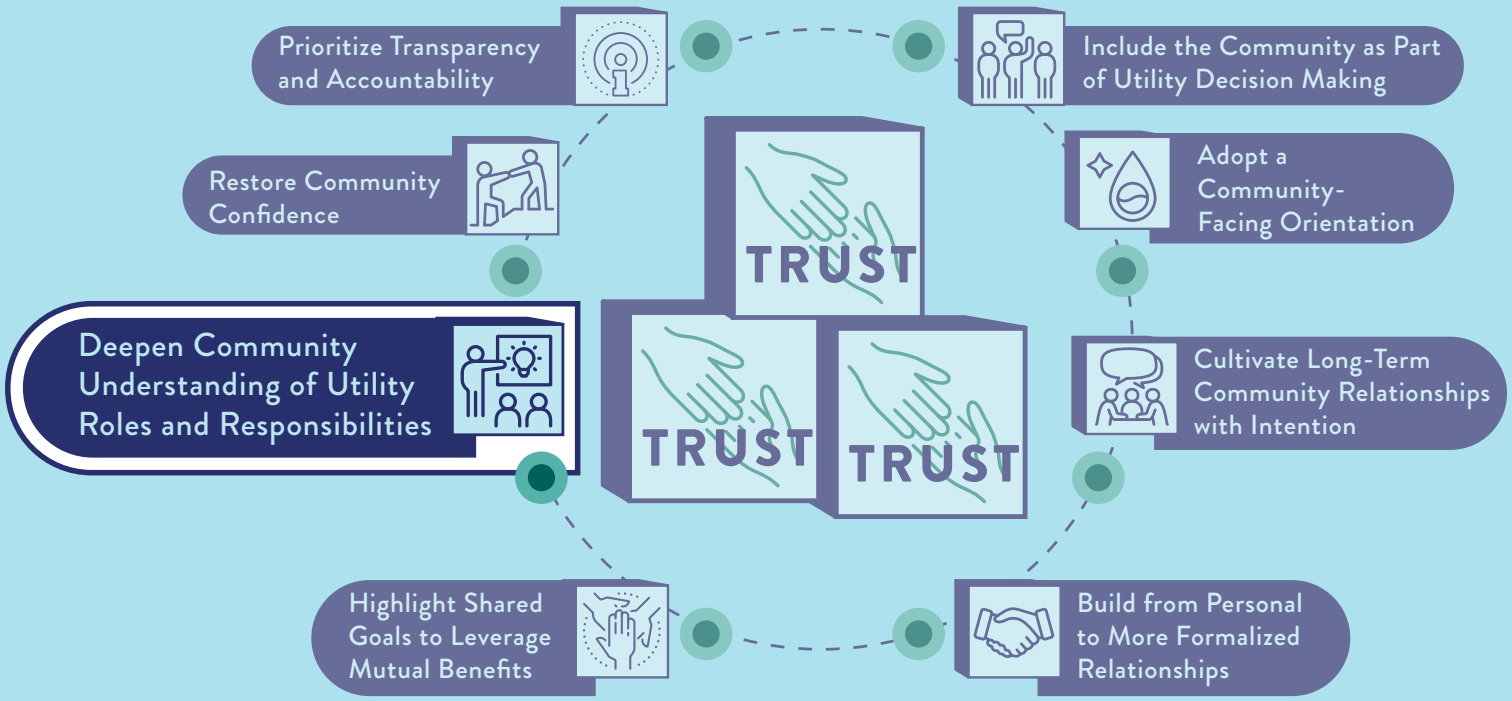
This report was written by Hilary Chen and Caroline Koch, WaterNow Alliance with input from April Ingle and Katherine Baer, River Network. Our work to support development of trusting, authentic and constructive relationships between community organizations and water utilities is made possible with the support of Spring Point Partners.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY?

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.

One of the building blocks of trust is the need to ***Deepen Community Understanding of Utility Roles and Responsibilities***. Designed to fulfill this building block, the Community Water Academy provides water managers and the communities they serve a forum to better understand local issues and needs as one step to creating and maintaining equitable and durable partnerships. Initiated by utilities or community members who want to develop relationships with their customers or water utility, the Community Water Academy can bring interested parties together and open up lines of communication.



Through Community Water Academy workshops, water system customers deepen their understanding of local water systems and water managers learn how collaboration between stakeholders (including customers, elected leaders, water system staff, and community organizations and leaders) can support a well-governed water system capable of meeting community expectations.

The purpose of this guide is to provide an accessible framework and actionable steps for creating a successful Community Water Academy in your community to strengthen the local water system and build long-term partnerships.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY – ACTIONABLE STEPS

Creating a successful Community Water Academy can be achieved in three steps. These steps are designed to help you through the process of developing your own workshop.

STEP 1 – DETERMINE IF A COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY IS A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

STEP 2 – CUSTOMIZE THE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY TO MEET YOUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

STEP 3 – DEVELOP YOUR COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY TIMELINE

STEP 1 – DETERMINE IF A COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY IS A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

A Community Water Academy works best for communities where community members and water utility managers and/or staff are both willing to engage to create a forum to build trust around a common purpose or issue. This forum should be a conducive environment that emphasizes inclusion, open and respectful communication, active listening, mutual understanding, constructive feedback, and collaborative brainstorming. In thinking about the purpose of the Community Water Academy, consider what guidelines to set to ensure that discussions are focused and purposeful. Water utility managers and/or staff and community members alike should be involved in developing and delivering the workshop to identify and reach shared outcomes. To determine whether a Community Water Academy is a good fit for your community a few considerations are listed below.

STEP 1.1 – CONFIRM WHO IS WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY

CONSIDERATIONS

Are key players willing to engage in the Community Water Academy? Key players include the utility, customers, elected officials, and community organizations and leaders. When all parties are involved and have access to the same information, they can better understand the reasoning behind decisions and actions. This transparency reduces skepticism, fosters trust, and minimizes potential conflicts. By engaging and communicating with each other, stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths, expertise, and resources to achieve common goals. Because the purpose of the Community Water Academy is to create and maintain a durable and equitable partnership between the community and the local water utility, it is crucial that at a minimum both the water local utility and community members are willing to engage in the workshop development and execution.

Are you experiencing difficulty making contact with water utility staff? Contacting water utility staff can be challenging for a variety of reasons, including understaffing, high demand, limited communication channels, and just not knowing where to start and who to contact. If you are looking for guidance on this specific issue, please refer to the **Equitable Water Infrastructure Toolkit** which provides guidance on contacting water utility staff.

STEP 1.2 - OVERCOME CHALLENGES AND MAINTAIN FLEXIBILITY

WHAT IF A UTILITY OR COMMUNITY PARTNER DOES NOT WANT TO ENGAGE?

Assess the reasons – it is important to understand the reasons behind the reluctance or refusal to participate. Are there specific concerns or past experiences that led to this? Gather as much information as you can to find alternative ways to engage and address those concerns.

Clearly communicate – articulate the objectives of the Community Water Academy and invite the reluctant party to discuss the workshops and any concerns they may have.

Engage allies and influencers – identify parties who have a positive relationship with the reluctant party and seek their support as an intermediary. Encourage these allies and influencers to advocate for the importance of the Community Water Academy and trust building exercises for the long-term health of community relationships and the local water system.

Explore alternative avenues if the utility or community does not want to be involved – As a Community Water Academy threshold, both parties should be involved. However, if all efforts to engage either party are unsuccessful, explore alternative avenues for getting closer to the goals.

a) Consider whether fresh faces and/or leadership change can help move past previous missteps. When there is a leadership change or new staff, try approaching again.

b) Consider using other trust-building practices first to repair trust and forge relationships that could set the stage for a Community Water Academy down the road:

→ Acknowledge that trust and/or interest is low and is worth rebuilding

→ Identify ways to bring the utility and community to a shared table for constructive conversations including use of a 3rd party facilitator

STEP 2 – CUSTOMIZE THE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY TO MEET YOUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

After you determine a Community Water Academy is a good fit, and both community organizations and the utility are on-board, it is time to tailor the Community Water Academy to meet your community's needs, priorities, and shared desired outcomes. A well-designed workshop has the power to bring people together, open the lines of communication, align goals, and create a supportive environment where ideas and pathways can be safely and effectively brainstormed and communicated. In this section, we will discuss key elements to contemplate when crafting your own bespoke Community Water Academy.

STEP 2.1 - ASSEMBLE YOUR WORKSHOP PLANNING TEAM

The workshop planning team should be representative, equitable, and inclusive. Such a team ensures that diverse community perspectives, experiences, and expertise are brought to the table. At the same time, it's important to strike a balance and avoid making the planning team so large that decision-making and effective communication is impeded. This balance will help ensure that the planning team remains small enough so that activities like regular planning activities remain manageable while being large enough to include various representative perspectives. Early on in the planning, the team should discuss and decide how decisions will be made, e.g., by consensus, majority vote, plurality (similar to majority vote but the option with the most votes wins), or group input plus one key decision-maker. Additionally, having team members who are able to meet regularly and be present during the workshop is important for efficient coordination, timely decision-making, and effective implementation of plans.

STEP 2.2 – BUILDING YOUR WORKSHOP CONTENT

A COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY SHOULD BE BUILT AROUND CERTAIN THRESHOLD CONTENT.

The workshop will build trust when it is designed to address topline community concerns and priorities related to water and the utility. Oftentimes, community members do not feel heard or that their concerns do not move beyond perfunctory platitudes. Your workshop participants, who will be primarily community members, want to see and hear that community concerns are heard, understood, and are being thoughtfully considered. Demonstrating that you recognize these concerns is an important step to engage participants in the Community Water Academy process. To identify these concerns, consult with your assembled planning group and compile the topline community concerns.[1]

Some common examples of pressing community concerns include:	
Water quality issues	Distrust of the utility
Infrastructure issues, e.g., lead and/or aging pipelines or service disruptions	Lack of communication between the utility and community
Affordability	Fiscal instability
Community frustration leading to apathy and disengagement	Lack of engagement or action by leaders

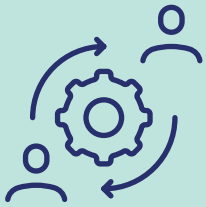
Participants come to the workshop with varying levels of knowledge. Therefore, it is helpful to provide some foundational information on water systems and utilities.

Helpful baseline information includes:	
Hydrological cycle	Relevant laws and regulations that govern the utility
Attributes of a well-governed water utility	Water testing and reporting
Role of key players – Keeping in mind the purpose of the Community Water Academy, center community and collaboration when discussing the roles of key stakeholders.	Perspectives on water equity and affordability

[1] See River Network's Community Led Research Toolkit as a resource to identify community concerns: https://www.rivernetwork.org/resource/community-led-research-equitable-climate-resilience/

A COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACH TO KEY PLAYERS' ROLES COULD BE FRAMED AS:

UTILITY



Manage water (including ensuring safety, adequacy, capability, reliability, etc.) and assets; provide customer service; include community in decision-making process; be transparent, e.g., make information easily accessible through regularly updated websites and direct outreach; maintain consistent communication with customers and community.

For more information, the **Equitable Water Infrastructure Toolkit** provides more helpful information on utilities.

CUSTOMERS

Participate in public engagement opportunities and provide feedback to water managers and elected officials; pay user rates; listen to information and concerns from the utility.

ELECTED LEADERS

Act as liaison, and communicate needs, between water managers and constituents; be available and receptive to alerts, concerns, and feedback from community; grow relationships between stakeholders.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERS

Serve as liaisons between customers and the utility; providing invaluable community/lived-experience expertise to inform community-centered decision making; serve as a trusted partner to help the utility deliver services and information to the community; bring additional partners in who can represent different parts of the community; model transparency and accountability by being transparent about goals and agenda; grow relationships between stakeholders.

As you go through this process, brainstorm who might be appropriate speakers to invite to your Community Water Academy.

Because of time constraints, a snapshot on the above topics is sufficient so long as the information is delivered in a clear and concise manner that avoids jargon and "industry-speak" and allows participants to easily digest and use it. It is also recommended that these technical issues be framed around how the topics intersect with residents' daily lives. Also, keep in mind that adults learn best when they are given the opportunity to interact with the material being presented. Find as many ways as possible to make your Academy interactive and fun for your participants. This not only helps participants learn, it can also be an important way to build camaraderie, relationships, and trust.

PRE-DESIGNED PROGRAM OUTLINE

STEP 2.3 – DEVELOPING THE WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS OUTLINE

The following pre-designed program outline with bulleted workshop sessions can serve as a foundation or framework, but should be adapted to suit the unique context, needs, and desired outcomes of each community.

a) Water systems/utility basics

→ Hydrological system – where does our water come from?

→ Types of water systems – drinking, wastewater, stormwater

b) Attributes of a well-run, well-governed water system

→ Asset management

- What service level do you want your utility to provide?
- What assets does your utility have?
- Which ones are most critical to provide that service?
- How does your utility ensure the assets do their job over their life spans?
- Does your utility have the money to get it all done?

→ Highlight the **Building Blocks of Trust** and importance of centering community in utility decision making

- How to foster an inclusive and participatory decision-making process?
- Where is information posted and shared?
- Who are the trusted leaders and messengers?
- What role can community representatives, leaders, and organizations play in acting as liaisons between water utilities and the communities they serve?

c) Collaborating to build well-run water systems

→ Key players (customers, water managers, elected officials, and community representatives, leaders, and organizations)

→ Highlight the importance of transparency and collaboration in achieving shared goals

- Water systems as a partnership

d) Perspectives on water equity and affordability

→ Equity:

- Universal access to safe, secure, clean, reliable, and affordable drinking water, and wastewater and stormwater management services
- All communities have a role in decision-making and share in the economic, social, and environmental benefits of water systems
- Investment in water infrastructure supporting the long-term sustainability of all waterways, water systems, and utilities
- See WaterNow's related resources: **Cleveland, OH Case Study**, **Santa Rosa, CA Case Study**, and **The Water Infrastructure Revolution StoryMap**

e) Affordability:

→ The cost of essential water, wastewater, and stormwater management services does not prevent access or interfere with other essential expenditures

→ Affordability metrics

- poverty levels
- unemployment rates
- percentage of people receiving other federal benefits
- affordability ratios - cost of water bill vs. disposable income

→ River Network provides a **Drinking Water Guide Fact Sheet: Water Affordability**

→ New tool alert

- The Natural Resources Defense Council released a new free downloadable **Water Affordability Business Case Tool** to help utilities assess the business case for implementing a discount program for low-income customers. The Tool accounts for offsetting increases in revenue and avoided costs that result from making bills more affordable.

→ See WaterNow's related resources: **Direct Installations and Other Strategies to Implement Localized Infrastructure on Private Properties in Frontline Communities** and **Avoiding Shutoffs**

f) Understanding Consumer Confidence Reports / Water Quality Reports

→ What are Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs)? - water quality reports providing consumers with important information about the quality of their drinking water

→ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires every community water supplier to provide a CCR to its customers

→ River Network provides a **Drinking Water Guide Fact Sheet: Consumer Confidence Reports**

STEP 2

STEP 2.4 – DEVELOPING WORKSHOP MATERIALS

Every community is unique with its own set of challenges, strengths, cultural nuances, specific needs, and desired outcomes. The attached **Appendix** includes example resources and handouts that can be customized to enhance relatability and relevance for your community and lead to a more impactful workshop. Effective and inclusive community outreach to advertise the Community Water Academy is also crucial for connecting with a diverse and representative audience. Outreach efforts should be intentional, considering factors such as locations of outreach, timing, and preferred communication channels to reach all interested community members.

Develop customized handouts for the Academy

- ☐ Sign-in/registration sheets
- ☐ Small group discussion/exercise worksheets
- ☐ Water rules snapshot handout
- ☐ Speaker headshots and bios
- ☐ Recent water quality reports from your utility
- ☐ Academy evaluation survey
- ☐ Academy agenda

Determine best ways to invite the community and design invites

- ☐ Door hangers
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Text messaging
- ☐ Peer to peer outreach
- ☐ Newspaper ads
- ☐ Emails
- ☐ Flyers
- ☐ Cold calls (where appropriate, e.g., small or rural community with limited access to the internet)

STEP 2.5 - WORKSHOP PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

As with any event, executing a Community Water Academy includes various logistics that need to be thought out and planned in order to maximize the potential of the Community Water Academy for your community. When walking through the logistics, it is important to consider the needs of all to minimize people or groups feeling marginalized.

1 Identify the Workshop Audience – By designing the workshop program to suit your audience and community needs and desired outcomes, you can enhance engagement, promote collaboration, and begin the process of building trust and moving towards achieving shared desired outcomes.

Consider the Audience

- → Water customers
- → Water managers and utility staff
- → Community members, leaders, and organizations
- → Elected or appointed officials

Consider the Presenters

- → Community representatives, organizers, and leaders
- → Utility staff and representatives
- → Local elected officials
- → Subject matter experts, e.g. experts in the field of engineering, public health, environmental justice and sustainability, community development, etc.

2 Select the Type of Workshop – In designing your Community Water Academy, deciding on a venue will be one of the first things that need to be decided. Will it be in-person, virtual, or hybrid? Considerations for each of these types of workshops are provided below.

In-person – Reserve location for in-room participants. In-person workshops allows for direct face-to-face interaction and promotes better engagement. Considerations:

- → Which local spaces are available for in-person workshops?
- → Does it cost money to reserve the space?
- → Is the space conducive to workshops?
  - Chairs and tables
  - Bathrooms
  - Technological capabilities
  - Parking options and access to public transportation”
- → Are stakeholders and invited panelists physically and financially able to travel to this location?
- → Are stakeholders comfortable being in a room together?
- → Does your budget allow for travel expenses?

Hybrid – Reserve location for in-room participants and set up virtual platform, e.g., Zoom, Teams, etc. Hybrid workshops allow for community stakeholders to be together in the room while facilitators, panelists, and community members who cannot be in-person join them virtually. Considerations:

- → Is the in-person room equipped with technological equipment (computer, internet access, microphone, speakers, etc.) and capabilities to host and stream the virtual platform where the facilitators and panelists are?
- → Are there in-person facilitators who are able to assist with the virtual platform?
- → See left for additional in-person considerations

Virtual – Set up online meeting space on platforms such as Zoom and Teams. Virtual workshops eliminate the need for travel and offer greater flexibility. Virtual workshops can also leverage various digital tools to enhance engagement. Considerations:

- → Do stakeholders and panelists have access to the internet?
- → Are stakeholders and panelists comfortable with online platforms like Zoom and Teams?
- → Who could be potentially left out from a virtual only workshop? How to ensure they can be included?

3 Set the Length of the Workshop – The length of your Community Water Academy is a critical factor that can greatly impact the effectiveness and outcomes of the workshop program. Considerations regarding the length of the workshop program are provided below.

The recommended length is ~3.5 hours / 220 min overall, though shorter or longer workshops may be appropriate. This time can be spread over multiple days, if needed. Some examples are below; however, what you ultimately decide depends on what works best for your community.

- → **Example 1:** 110 min workshop on a weekday evening for session 1, followed by another 110 min weekday evening workshop for session 2 within a span of a week.
- → **Example 2:** One-day weekend workshop spanning 3.5 hours.

The actual length of the workshop will be determined by the design and content of the Community Water Academy you tailor. Some determinative factors include:

- → **Learning objectives** – if the objectives are extensive and require in-depth exploration or discussion, the workshop will need to be longer to accommodate sufficient time for participants to grasp the concepts and apply them with interactive exercises.
- → **Topics covered** – the number and complexity of topics covered will affect the workshop length.
- → **Number of presenters** – the number of presenters included will also affect the workshop length.
- → **Number of activities and exercises** – Successful Community Water Academies are those that encourage hands-on activities, group discussions, and participant involvement. Provide interactive exercises to allow for participant input, discussion, feedback, and reflection. This level of interactivity requires more time than more lecture-based workshops, as participants need sufficient opportunities to engage, share ideas, and collaborate. The inclusion of various activities, exercises, and practical demonstrations will extend the workshop duration and will need to be balanced against other considerations listed in this section.
- → **Flexibility and adaptability** – the workshop program should have some degree of flexibility to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, such as extended discussions, participant questions, and technical difficulties. Building in flexibility allows facilitators and presenters to adapt the content and activities on the spot, which may affect the overall length of the workshop.
- → **Time constraints** – external factors such as venue availability, scheduling constraints, or participant availability can influence the workshop's length.

Include Interactive segments to provide opportunities for participant input and feedback

- → Polls
- → Quizzes
- → Check-ins, e.g., what has resonated the most?
- → Small group discussions/exercises
- → Jamboard
- → Whiteboard
- → Large sticky notes on the walls
- → Tour of utility

4 Choose Workshop Incentives – Some participants look forward to incentives when they engage in a workshop for a variety of reasons. Incentives can emphasize that workshop planners considered the program from the participants' point of view. When evaluating the appropriateness of incentives, it is important to assess the potential benefits and drawbacks they may bring.

Are incentives appropriate?

- → **Participant motivation** – having and being able to advertise incentives can be a draw for participants to come to the workshop
- → **Program objectives** – would providing certain incentives potentially conflict with achieving program objectives? For example, if participants are there only for the incentives, the quality of the participation may be surface level or nonexistent. However, incentives could also draw in participants who would not have otherwise considered attending.
- → **Financial constraints** – does your budget allow for providing incentives? Some incentives are more affordable than others.

Types of Incentives

- → **Certificates for participation** – provides participants with proof of participation and a sense of connection to each other and other communities that have participated
- → **Recruitment into a community organization** – segues participants into long-term engagement
- → **SWAG** – surface level incentives such as pens, badges, folders, etc.
- → **Refreshments** – an in-person workshop spanning breakfast, lunch, or dinner time should include a meal, and outside of mealtimes still consider providing some refreshments for participants if your budget allows
- → **Child care** – provides participants with young children flexibility to attend without finding, or paying for, child care
- → **Transportation or transit vouchers** – provides participants with options to get to your meeting

STEP 3 – DEVELOP YOUR COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY TIMELINE

STEP 3

You will need to begin planning your Community Water Academy *at least* two months before the date of the workshop. As detailed below, during this planning process you will meet with your assembled team of workshop planners and go over the considerations listed within this guide, secure a physical venue if needed, draft a concept outline that can be shared with potential panelists to secure their availability, develop the Community Water Academy presentations and materials, and conduct outreach to invite and encourage community members to attend.

STEP 3.1 – PRE-PLANNING

(2 MONTHS PRIOR)

- ☐ Assemble Planning Team
- ☐ Identify community and community contacts
- ☐ Set regular planning meetings, e.g., on a bi-weekly basis, to ensure that tasks are managed in a timely manner and that any issues that come up can be addressed
- ☐ Research community water systems and create a municipal profile **(Appendix A)**

- ☐ Arrange for a group prep call with community contacts to discuss municipal profile, community concerns and objectives, other community contacts, potential speakers, and possible dates
- ☐ Draft Community Water Academy outline based on template **(Appendix B)**
- ☐ Circulate draft Community Water Academy outline with community contacts and revise based on feedback
- ☐ Invite Community Water Academy speakers
- ☐ Finalize Community Water Academy dates
- ☐ Identify type of workshop
- ☐ Confirm speakers; Set calendar invites and send to speakers and community contacts

STEP 3.2 – PLANNING & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

(1 MONTH PRIOR)

- ☐ Draft community workshop invites and share with community contacts; revise based on feedback
  - → See Step 2 above for some strategies for reaching community members
  - → An example invite is included **(Appendix D)**
- ☐ Develop registration system for participants
- ☐ Determine what, if any, incentives you will provide
- ☐ Distribute invites to community based on the best methods the team identifies
- ☐ Draft presentation slides for Community Water Academy
- ☐ Share draft slides with community contacts and revise based on feedback
- ☐ Draft interactive/small group exercises **(Appendix G)**
  - → Polls
  - → Mini World Café
  - → Worksheets with discussion prompts
- ☐ Draft Community Water Academy handouts, including evaluations **(Appendix H)**
- ☐ Draft initial run of show **(Appendix C)**
- ☐ Share run of show and handouts, and revise based on feedback
- ☐ Arrange for a group prep call with community contacts and speakers to discuss the run of show, handouts, slides, and in-room and virtual logistics/tech check
  - → What equipment will be required for in-room participants?
  - → What online requirements are needed for virtual participants?
  - → Determine table set up for small group exercises
  - → Follow up on invites and number of registered participants
- ☐ Finalize slides and handouts for Community Water Academy and distribute
  - → Mail physical copies to community contacts, if requested
- ☐ Finalize run of show and distribute to speakers and community contacts
- ☐ Conduct a practice run-through of Community Water Academy with speakers

STEP 3.3 – HOST COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY

(DAY OF)

- ☐ Set up room or online platform
- ☐ Assemble 30 minutes prior to the Community Water Academy to conduct last round tech check and go over any questions
- ☐ Conduct Community Water Academy

STEP 3.4 – POST-COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY

(FOLLOW UP)

- ☐ Review Community Water Academy evaluations
  - → Compile and save feedback for guidance on future workshops
- ☐ Check in with community contacts regarding the Community Water Academy
- ☐ Discuss how feedback will inform next Community Water Academy and ongoing partnerships and collaboration between the utility and community
- ☐ Report back on next steps to participants and identify opportunities to stay engaged

STEP 3

One way to stay in touch after the Community Water Academy is to organize a community committee that meets regularly to follow up with each other and key players. We hope that the process of developing and hosting your own Community Water Academy created and/or strengthened strong authentic and equitable relationships between the local water utility and the communities it serves. These relationships, built on trust, open communication, and mutual understanding, are essential for collaborative problem solving and sustainable solutions to water related challenges.

APPENDIX

(A) MUNICIPAL PROFILE – compiled background information on the community and utility to inform workshop development

(B) OUTLINE – concept outline to share with stakeholders and potential speakers

(C) RUN OF SHOW – developed outline with speakers, breaks, and timing cues to share with stakeholders

(D) INVITE/FLYER – advertisement for the Community Water Academy

(E) SIGN-IN SHEETS – registration sheets to save participants' contact information

(F) PUBLIC WORKSHOP AGENDA – agenda to share with participants and the public

(G) DISCUSSION WORKSHEET – prompts and exercises for participant discussion

(H) EVALUATION FORM – post-workshop evaluation form to collect feedback, assess relevance and engagement, and identify areas of improvement and follow-up

RIVER NETWORK & WATERNOW ALLIANCE RESOURCES

Building Blocks of Trust: Creating Authentic and Equitable Relationships Between Community Organizations and Water Utilities

Equitable Water Infrastructure Toolkit

Tools for Equitable Climate Resilience: Fostering Community-Led Research and Knowledge

Drinking Water Guide Fact Sheet: Water Affordability

Drinking Water Guide Fact Sheet: Consumer Confidence Reports

Tap Into Resilience Toolkit

The Water Infrastructure Revolution StoryMap

WaterNow Project Accelerator Featured Projects

APPENDIX A – MUNICIPAL PROFILE

Creating a municipal profile of who provides the water, where it's from and who makes decisions can help provide some baseline understanding of the water, wastewater and/or stormwater systems. Places to source information from include:

- **The utility's website if it has one**
- **Census.gov**
- **Department of Health**
- **Regional Environmental Finance Center**
- **Annual Drinking Water Quality Report**
- **Informational interview with utility staff**

Below is an example municipal profile completed at the beginning of the planning process to help inform the customization of the Community Water Academy. Individual names and contact information have been removed.

EXAMPLE: FULTON, AR CREATED 1/20/2023

Water Provider:

Fulton Water Department, a.k.a. Fulton Waterworks, a.k.a. Fulton Water. A small municipal-owned public water system.

Water Service Area/Jurisdiction:

Town of Fulton, Hempstead County, Arkansas

Type of Water Provider:

a) **Retail Only**

b) **Drinking Water and Wastewater (with different service areas for each, see below)**

c) **Municipal water services only**

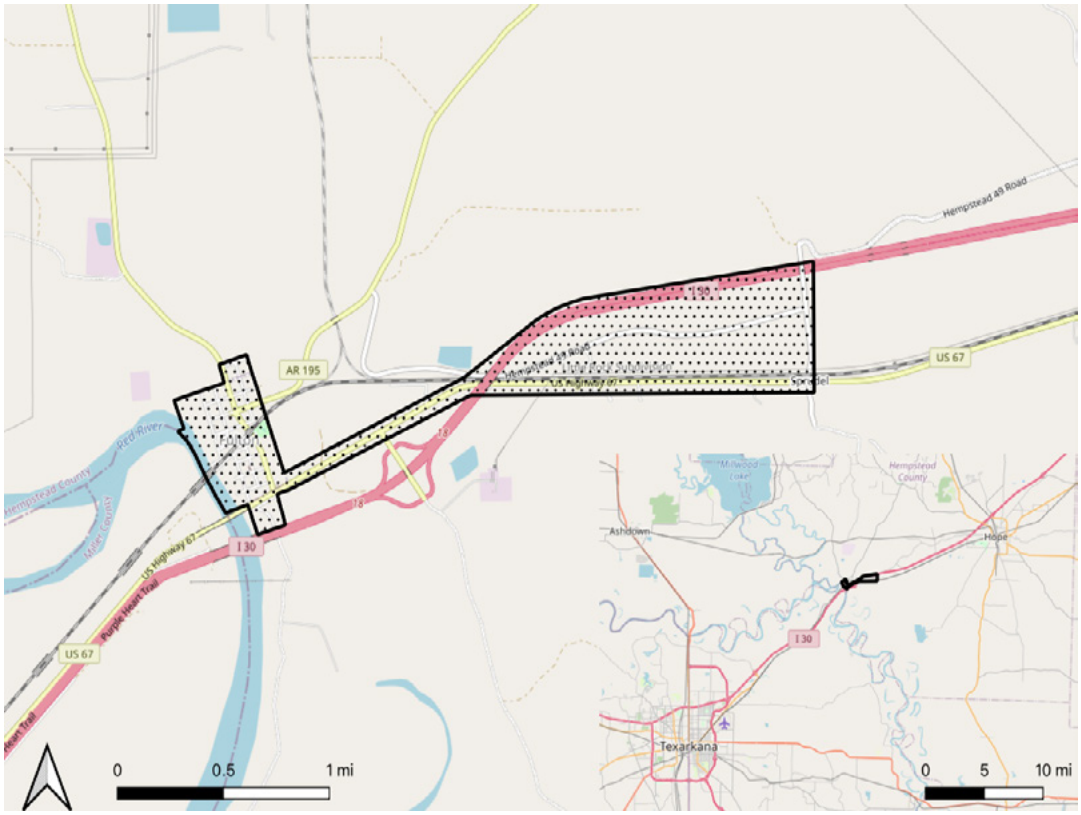
Water Service Facts:

Location: Fulton is located in Hempstead County in southwestern Arkansas, roughly halfway between Texarkana and Hope, at the junction of Arkansas Highway 355 and Interstate 30, on the Red River.

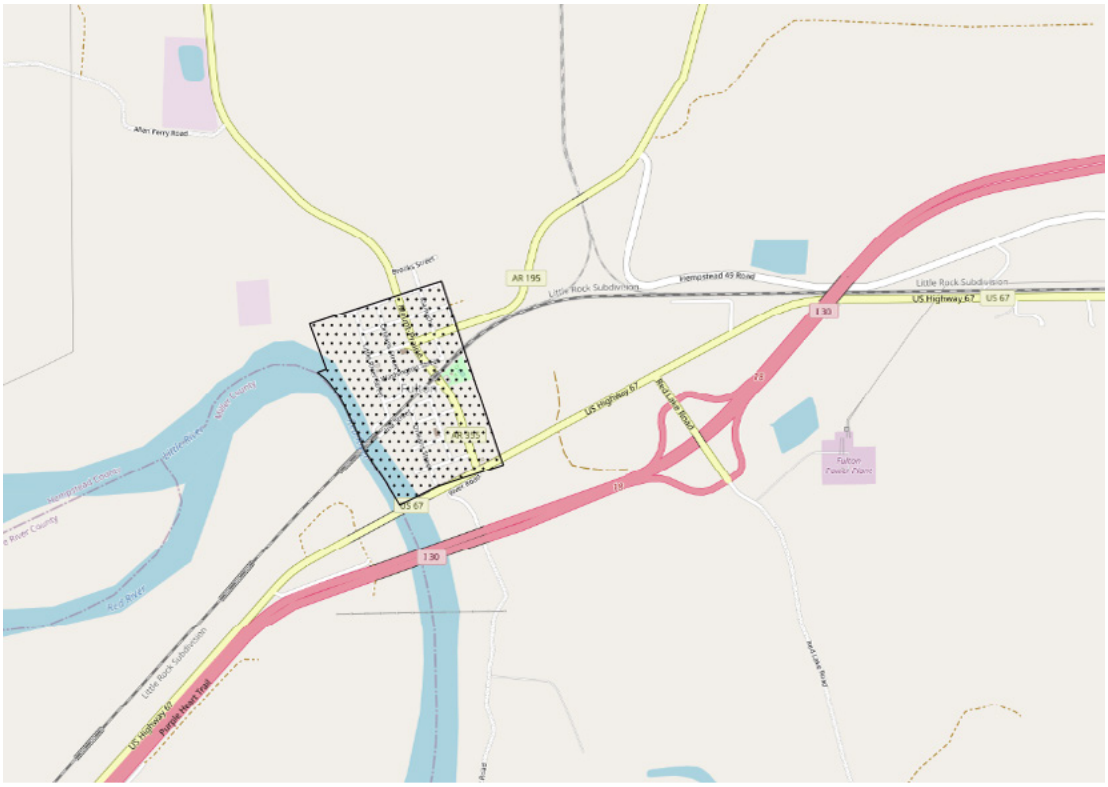
Service Area Size:

Fulton Water serves an area of 1.0 sq. mi. with drinking water, and a smaller 0.20 sq. mi. area with wastewater services. Wastewater services are restricted to the town of Fulton—see maps on the following page.

A map of Fulton Water's drinking water service area. Inset: Fulton Water's service area situated between Texarkana and Hope, AR.



A map of Fulton's wastewater service area.



Population:

- **Arkansas Dept of Health** reports a service population of 365.
- UNC EFC study estimates 365.
- Decennial Census established a population of 115 for Fulton town proper (only the westernmost portion of the service area) in 2020, ACS 2021 census estimated 181±70.

Service Connections:

148 according to an **UNC Environmental Finance Center study.**

Average Annual Water Use (Demand):

Arkansas Dept of Health reports an average demand of 65368 GPD, or an annual demand of ~2.39 million gallons.

Average Gallons Per Capita Per Day (GPCD):

Using the figures provided by Arkansas Dept of Health, we can calculate 179 GPCD.

Physical Sources of Water Supply:

Water is sourced from two local groundwater wells. The **2021 Drinking Water Quality Report** indicates that the wells pump from the Nacatoch Sand Aquifer.

Water Supply Situation:

a) **Secure/Vulnerable?**

→ Low to medium risk of contamination, according to the **2021 Drinking Water Quality Report**. The Arkansas Department of Health has completed a Source Water Vulnerability Assessment for Fulton Water, but the complete document is not available online.

→ A 2012 review of water pollution reports (**NYTimes**) found levels of lead above health guidelines but below legal limits.

→ **Low risk of subsidence** in the greater Nacatoch Sand Aquifer.

b) **Availability of surplus supply?**

→ **ADH lists** System Maximum Demand as 79000 GPD, 120% of the average.

c) **Ability to develop new sources of supply?**

→ Unknown, likely limited by financial capacity although proximity to Red River may provide a potential new source of supply if necessary.

d) **# years of storage capacity?**

→ Aquifer appears unlikely to be depleted.

e) **Drought resilience?**

→ Drought risk is relatively high according to the **National Risk Index**, as is social vulnerability. However, groundwater sources are likely not at risk from drought in the short to medium term.

f) **Fire threat high/low?**

→ Very Low according to the **National Risk Index.**

g) **Price of Water: High/Low?**

→ Low, compared to other small utilities in Arkansas. **An UNC EFC study** found that as of August 2020, Fulton's water prices were in the lowest 10% among Arkansas water utilities with fewer than 500 accounts.

Water Decision Makers

a) **Water Provider's Decision Making Body:**

→ Town of Fulton Council – acts in its capacity as the water board for Fulton Water Works

b) **Individual Members of Decision Making Body**

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS					
Title	**First Name**	**Middle**	**Last Name**	**Phone**	**Email**
Mayor					
Councilmember					
Councilmember					
Councilmember					
Councilmember					
Councilmember					

General District Phone # - [Insert phone number] / Utility Email address? - [Insert email address]

a) **Executive Water Management Staff**

→ Water Superintendent – [Insert name and contact information] [Source:]

→ Operator; Emergency Contact – [Insert name and contact information] [Source:]

b) **Other Key Councils/Boards associated with the utility?**

→ Community organization: [Insert name of community organization and contact information]

- Project lead – [Insert name and contact information]

Other Info:

a) In 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Steering Committee approved $270m to the Ark. Dept. of Ag. for water, wastewater, and stormwater projects. Hempstead County received funding for various water improvement projects. *ANRC approves funds for local water and waste/water projects,* Southwest Arkansas Radio, **https://southwestarkansasradio.com/anrc-approves-funds-for-local-water-and-waster-water-projects/** (last visited Jan. 24, 2023).

b) Poverty rate is 21.3%.
[Source: UNC Environmental Finance Center AR Water and Wastewater Rates Dashboard]

c) 24.6% of residential customers had less than $25k in annual income.
[Source: IB Environmental Affordability Assessment]

d) Total pop. approx. 181.

→ 64 male, 117 female.

→ Approx. 8 people under 18yo.

→ Approx. 173 people are voting age 18+.

[Source: **https://data.census.gov/table?q=Fulton+town,+Arkansas&tid=ACSDP5Y2021.DP05**]

Basic Geography/Demographic Facts

a) Racial Profile:

→ Approx. 94 people identified as white.

→ 85 identify as Black or African American.

→ Approx. 2 identified as White and American Indian.

[Source: **https://data.census.gov/table?q=Fulton+town,+Arkansas&tid=ACSDP5Y2021.DP05**]

b) Median Age: 59 years old

c) Median Household Income: $22,188
[Source: UNC Environmental Finance Center AR Water and Wastewater Rates Dashboard]

d) Housing:

→ Total households: 109

→ Avg. household size: 1.66

→ 1-unit structures = 81.7%

→ Mobile homes = 18.3%

→ Owner-occupied = 83.5%

→ Rent-occupied = 16.5%

[Source: **https://data.census.gov/table?q=Fulton+town,+Arkansas&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S1101**]

Other websites of interest:

Arkansas Municipal League on Fulton: **https://local.arkansas.gov/local.php?agency=fulton**

APPENDIX B – EXAMPLE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY CONCEPT OUTLINE

This is an example of an outline of a Community Water Academy that can be used as part of the planning process as you identify key areas on which to focus.

WORKING TITLE: [CITY/TOWN NAME] COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY

Location, Date & Time

a) The academy will take place over two days one week apart

b) Each program will be about 1.5 hours

c) Potential Dates

Overview & Objectives

a) Provide community / water system customers baseline information on water systems and utility, particularly the unique aspects of small water systems

b) Equip the community with knowledge of characteristics of a well-run, well-governed water system

c) Open the lines of communication between the community and water managers

Audience

a) [Utility Name] customers and community members

b) [Community organization(s)] members

c) [Utility Name] decision makers

Potential Speakers (consider a variety of speakers from the community, utility, local universities, consultants, etc.)

a) [Insert list of potential speakers]

Helpful Pre-workshop Reading Materials

a) **Day 1** – **Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management** and **Building Blocks of Trust**

b) **Day 2** – **Understanding the Basics of Drinking Water Sources, Treatment, and Quality (video)** and **Drinking Water Guide**

WORKSHOP SESSIONS / AGENDA

DAY 1: BUILDING THE BASICS – FUNDAMENTALS OF HEALTH WATER SYSTEMS

Introduction and overview (10 min)

Mini World Café: (20 min)

a) **Acknowledgement of planning team**

b) **Overview of World Café process and context for the discussion (5 min)**

c) **World Café (10 min)**

→ Round: How might a healthy water system look differently to different people and parties? E.g., what does "healthy" mean to you, a municipality, a utility?

d) **Report back / sharing (5 min)**

e) **In-room handouts: Note taking sheets for each table**

f) **Learning Objectives: Foster a conversation about topline community concerns and priorities related to water**

What Does it Take to Have Safe Water and Healthy Water Systems? (30 min)

a) **Speakers:**

b) **Topics:**

→ Hydrologic Cycle

→ Water use and water supplies; national trends

→ Water systems overview: drinking water, wastewater, stormwater

- How do utilities determine when water is safe and "healthy"?
- Effective Utility Management attributes: Product Quality, Infrastructure Stability, Water Adequacy
- Customer/Community engagement

→ [City/town name] water systems: what are they and what do they do?

- Where does [city/town name] water come from?
- How does a utility ensure water capacity for various uses, e.g., residential use, fire protection, etc.?

→ [Others identified by your planning team]

c) **Format:** Overview presentations from the speakers

→ What is the work that water does in daily life?

→ Journey of the Water Utility and Daily Life

d) **Learning Objectives:** Have foundational understanding of the types of water systems, how utilities manage them, and how to achieve and maintain "healthy" water

What Does it Take Q&A (10 min)

BREAK – 15 min

Collaborating to Build "Healthy" Water Systems (25 min)

a) **Speakers:**

b) **Topics:**

→ Attributes: Customer Satisfaction, Stakeholder Understanding & Support, Community Sustainability & Economic Development

→ Trust Building: **Building Blocks of Trust**

→ Roles:

- What is the utility's responsibility?
  - Building and maintaining transparency, trust, communication, and action
- What additional services can a utility provide?
  - Maintaining updated information, e.g., updating CDBG income surveys allows community to access more funding
- Role for residents/customers, including—
  - Building participation and engagement
  - Accessing funding / grants

c) **Take home brainstorm:** Rank the importance of utility management areas and trust building goals to be reported back on Day 2

d) **In-room handouts:** Take home brainstorm sheets

e) **Learning Objectives:** Develop a working knowledge of what it takes to have an equitable, well-run water and wastewater utility, know what questions to ask when facing a local water challenge, and understanding how collaboration can lead to a better run water system

Wrap up & Day 2 preview (10 min)

DAY 2: PERSPECTIVES – EQUITY, AFFORDABILITY, & WATER RULES

Welcome back & reorienting (10 min)

Report back on take home ranking of utility management areas and trust building goals (15 min)

a) **What aspects had similar rankings and why?**

b) **What aspects had different rankings and why?**

c) **Discuss the importance of equity and trust building in achieving common goals**

Perspectives on Water Equity & Affordability (30 min)

a) **Speakers:**

b) **Topics:**

→ What is water equity?

→ Best practices for centering equity in water system management

→ Municipal finance basics

- Financial Viability
- Costs breakdown, i.e., fixed vs. variable costs
- Rate setting and structures
  - How to prevent rates from becoming overly burdensome on community?
  - Why might different towns pay different rates when in the same water system?
- Operating and capital budgets
  - Why can't existing money be spent on water infrastructure?
  - What is the rating of various assets within the system?

→ How is affordability measured? What's affordable?

- Are there assistance programs for households struggling to pay?

→ Strategies for keeping water and wastewater services affordable

c) **Format:** Speaker presentations (to be informed by the planning team and Day 1 mini world café discussion)

d) **In-room handouts:** Water equity and municipal finance basics handout

e) **Interactive Anonymous Poll:** (1) What opportunities are there for water equity efforts? E.g., water quality, affordability programs, workforce development/community revitalization, etc.; (2) What support/partnerships would be needed to implement water equity effort strategies? E.g., Support with planning/assessment/prioritization, collaborating on accessing funding, etc.

f) **Learning Objectives:** Build a foundation of understanding about how utility finances work and strategies for ensuring equitable and affordable access to water and wastewater services

Perspectives on Equity and Affordability Q&A (10 min)

BREAK – 15 min

Water Rules – A snapshot (25 min)

a) **Speakers:**

b) **Topics:**

→ Safe Drinking Water Act

→ Clean Water Act

→ State Rules, Departments, and/or Commissions Governing Water

→ How to research your water systems rules and reporting

- How often does a utility need to perform water testing and what metrics are used?
- What is the industry standard for water quality testing?
- What is the industry standard for pipe repair and replacement?

→ Format: Snapshot presentations on federal and state laws; Tutorial on how to access relevant rules, departments, and reports with live step-by-step guide

→ In-room handouts: 2-page summary of relevant state and federal agencies and their roles

→ Learning Objectives: Develop skills to conduct independent research on relevant water rules and governing agencies

Water Rules Q&A (10 min)

Wrap up (10 min)

APPENDIX C – EXAMPLE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY RUN OF SHOW

Once you have a final agenda, it is helpful to create a detailed "run of show" for speakers and everyone on the planning and presentation team to keep everything running smoothly. This is an example from a hybrid online/in-person workshop.

PREP & TECH CHECK: MARCH 28 (PLANNING TEAM ONLY; 3:30PM / 5:30PM CST)

PRACTICE RUN THROUGH AT VENUE

- ☐ Set up
- ☐ Discuss workshop tech, logistics, refreshments, handouts
- ☐ Run through workshops
- ☐ Determine table set up most conducive for small group exercises, registration, refreshments, and handouts
- ☐ Final push for invitations

DAY 1: MARCH 30

5:45–8:00 p.m. Fundamentals of Healthy Water Systems

4:00 p.m. – Set up tech, tables, and handouts ([insert names of point people])

5:00 p.m. – Lead facilitators on call/standby for any issues ([insert names of point people])

5:45 p.m. – Speakers join zoom ([insert names of speakers])

5:45 p.m. – Registration & Refreshments ([insert names of point people])

6:15 p.m. – 6:25 p.m. Introduction

[**Insert name of speaker**] kicks off the meeting: describes objectives; show of hands – comfort level with understanding how water systems work? 1) Just getting started, 2) I feel a little comfortable with how drinking water and wastewater systems work, 3) I've got a good understanding of these systems (4 min)

[**Insert name of speaker**]: Opening remarks highlighting the workshop purpose (6 min)

6:25 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. Session 1: Building the Basics

[**Insert name of speaker**]**:** Introduces Mini World Café (5 min)

→ Overview of World Café process and context for the discussion

→ Launch breakout group for any virtual participants ([insert names of point people])

World Café (10 min)

→ What does "healthy water" mean to you? What might it mean to a utility?

→ [Insert names of point people] to assist with table discussions

Report back / sharing (5 min)

Session 1 Materials:

→ In-room handouts: Note taking sheets for each table

→ Learning Objectives: Foster a conversation about topline community concerns and priorities related to water

6:45 p.m. – 7:10 p.m. Session 2: What Does it Take to Have Safe Water and Healthy Water Systems?

[**Insert name of speaker]:** Introduces topic and speakers (2 min)

→ What is the work that water does in daily life?

→ Journey of the Water Utility and Daily Life

[**Insert name of speaker]:** Water Systems Overview (12 min)

→ Hydrologic Cycle; Water use and water supplies; national trends

→ Water systems overview: drinking water, wastewater, stormwater; Unique features of rural / sub-suburban/urban water systems; components of a small/medium/large water system

→ How do utilities determine when water is safe and "healthy"?

→ Water utilities are a triangle: staff, decision makers, customers

→ Asset management; it's a process not a technology

[**Insert name of speaker]:** What's in the works for [city/town name] water system (10 min)

→ [Insert updates to share]

Session 2 Materials:

→ Speaker slides

→ Learning Objectives: Have foundational understanding of the types of water systems, how utilities manage them, and how to achieve and maintain "healthy" water

7:10 p.m. – 7:20 p.m. What Does it Take Q&A

7:20 – 7:30 p.m. BREAK – 10 min

7:30 p.m. – 7:55 p.m. – Session 3: Collaborating to Build "Healthy" Water Systems

[**Insert name of speaker**] welcomes everyone back from break; introduces session (reference building blocks of trust) and speakers (2min)

[**Insert name of speaker**]**:** Pathways for Collaboration (10min)

→ What is the utility's responsibility as a customer service provider?

- Building and maintaining transparency, trust, communication, and action

→ Examples on role for residents/customer, including and strategies for —

- Building participation and engagement
- Accessing funding / grants

→ Q&A during presentation

[**Insert name of speaker**]**:** Gauging Community Priorities (10min)

→ Explain take home exercise

→ Prioritize from low to high the importance of utility management areas and trust building goals to be reported back on Day 2

→ See take home worksheet

Session 3 Materials

→ Speaker slides

→ Take Home Worksheet – Gauging Community Priorities

→ Learning Objectives: Develop an of understanding of utilities as a triumvirate (utility, decision makers, customers/community), the expectations customers have of its utility, and how collaboration can lead to a better run water system

7:55 – 8:00 p.m. Wrap up & Day 2 preview

[**Insert name of speaker**] previews Day 2 and thanks folks for Day 1

DAY 2: APRIL 6

5:45 – 8:00 p.m. Central Time Perspectives – Equity, Affordability, & Water Rules

4:00 p.m. – Set up tech, tables, and handouts ([Insert names of point people])

5:00 p.m. – Lead facilitators on call/standby for any issues ([Insert names of point people])

5:45 p.m. – Day 2 speakers join Zoom ([Insert names of speakers])

5:45 p.m. – Registration & Refreshments ([Insert names of point people])

6:15 p.m. – 6:20 p.m. Welcome back & reorienting

[**Insert name of speaker**] welcomes everyone and provides refresher on objectives and goals for Day 2

6:20 p.m. – 6:35 p.m. Session 4: Report back on take home ranking of utility management areas and trust building goals

[**Insert name of speaker**] facilitate discussion about:

→ What topics had similar rankings and why?

→ What topics had different rankings and why?

→ How might water managers guess the community's rankings?

→ Discuss the importance of equity and trust building in achieving common goals

→ Process: Note topic on color coded sticky notes that correspond to 1-5 ranking to post on larger poster stickies labeled high, medium, low priority; Color code: 1 = yellow, 2 = blue, 3 = pink, 4 = orange, 5 = red with 1 being highest priority

Session 5 panelists welcome to join discussion

Share top line takeaways

6:35 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. Session 5: Perspectives on Water Equity & Affordability

[**Insert name of speaker**]**:** Introduces session and speakers (2 min)

[**Insert name of speaker**]**:** What is water equity? How is affordability measured? (10 min)

→ National / best practice perspective on:

- The ways water affordability can be measured
- What's considered affordable
- Types of assistance programs for households struggling to pay
- Strategies for keeping water and wastewater services affordable

→ Resource: Section 4 of River Network's Drinking Water Guide

→ Highlight questions

- Example: Why is my bill going up?

[**Insert name of speaker**]**:** Best practices for centering community / collaboration (10 min)

→ Customer Satisfaction – opening utilities up to consistent communication, transparency, and community engagement

→ Stakeholder Understanding & Support – utilities may not always have the answers

→ Community Sustainability & Economic Development

→ Highlighting both informal engagement (e.g., regular communications updates) to formal discussions (e.g., community meetings)

→ Discussion that it's okay for the utility not to have all the answers as long as there is consistent communication

→ Sharing personal experiences during time at a utility

[**Insert name of speaker**]**:** Role for elected officials (10 min)

→ Connecting with water system managers

- Testing, communication, and responding to competing messages

→ Connecting with customers

- Accessibility, visibility, and communication

→ Building and maintaining transparency, trust, communication, and action

- Consistent communication, even if to say there are no updates or answers

Session 5 Materials

→ Speaker slides

→ Learning Objectives: Build a foundation of understanding about how utility finances work and strategies for ensuring equitable and affordable access to water and wastewater services

7:15 p.m. – 7:25 p.m. Perspectives on Equity and Affordability Q&A

7:25 p.m. – 7:35 p.m. BREAK – 10 min

7:35 p.m. – 7:55 p.m. Session 6: Water Rules - A snapshot

[**Insert name of speaker**] gives quick snapshot on (10 min)

→ Safe Drinking Water Act

→ Clean Water Act

→ State Rules, Departments, and/or Commissions Governing Water

[**Insert name of speaker**] gives live walk through on "How to research your water systems rules and reporting" to answer: (10 min)

→ How often does a utility need to perform water testing and what is measured?

→ What is the industry standard for water quality testing?

Session 6 Materials

→ Speaker slides

→ Learning Objectives: Develop skills to conduct independent research on relevant water rules and governing agencies

7:45 p.m. – 7:55 p.m. Water Rules Q&A (10 min)

8:00 p.m. Wrap up & Next steps

[**Insert name of speaker**] thanks everyone

[**Insert names of point people**] share next steps / info

Mingling etc.

APPENDIX D – EXAMPLE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY INVITE

Click here to adapt the template for your event.

YOU'RE INVITED...

[INSERT LOCATION HERE] COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY

SESSION 1: [insert date here]
SESSION 2: [insert date here]

REGISTRATION: 5:45 p.m. ACADEMY: 6:15 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS WILL BE NEW MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON FULTON WATER OPERATIONS FINDING OUR VOICE.

IN-PERSON @ [insert location here]
VIRTUAL [insert link here]

KINDLY RSVP TO PLAN FOR REFRESHMENTS & MATERIALS
[Insert Names and Contact Info for Point People]

SESSION 1: BUILDING THE BASICS - FUNDAMENTALS OF HEALTHY WATER SYSTEMS

SESSION 2: PERSPECTIVES - EQUITY, AFFORDABILITY & WATER RULES

CONDUCTED BY

[insert organization name if applicable]

HOSTED BY

[insert organization name if applicable]

river NETWORK connecting people·saving rivers

waternow alliance

APPENDIX E – EXAMPLE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY SIGN IN SHEET

Registration or sign-in sheets allow workshop organizers to follow up with workshop participants.

WELCOME TO DAY 1 OF THE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY! PLEASE SIGN IN BELOW.

	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	PHONE #	EMAIL ADDRESS
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

APPENDIX F – COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY PUBLIC WORKSHOP AGENDA

This is an example of an agenda for a Community Water Academy that was used to provide a public facing outline for distribution.

COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY – AGENDA

DAY 1: MARCH 30, 2023
FUNDAMENTALS OF HEALTHY WATER SYSTEMS

5:45 p.m. – Registration & Refreshments

6:15 p.m. – Introduction

6:25 – 6:45 p.m. – Session 1: Building the Basics

→ Mini World Café

6:45 – 7:10 p.m. – Session 2: What Does it Take to Have Safe Water and Healthy Water Systems?

→ Journey of the Water Utility and Daily Life

→ Water Systems Overview

→ [city/town name] Updates

7:10 – 7:20 p.m. – Session 2 Q&A

7:20-7:30 p.m. – Break

7:30 – 7:55 p.m. – Session 3: Collaborating to Build "Healthy" Water Systems

→ Pathways for Collaboration and Q&A

→ Gauging Community Priorities

7:55 – 8:00 p.m. – Wrap Up & Day 2 Preview

**Flip over for Day 2 Agenda*

COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY – AGENDA

DAY 2: APRIL 6, 2023
PERSPECTIVES – EQUITY, AFFORDABILITY, AND WATER RULES

5:45 p.m. – Registration & Refreshments

6:15 – 6:20 p.m. – Welcome Back & Reorienting

6:20 – 6:35 p.m. – Session 4: Report Back on Gauging Community Priorities Exercise

→ Facilitated discussion

6:35 – 7:05 p.m. – Session 5: Perspectives on Water Equity and Affordability

→ What is Water Equity? How is Affordability Measured?

→ Best Practices for Centering Community and Collaboration

→ Role for Elected Officials

7:05 – 7:15 p.m. – Session 5 Q&A

7:15 – 7:25 p.m. – Break

7:25 – 7:45 p.m. – Session 6: Water Rules

→ Snapshot of Water Rules

→ How to Research Your Water System's Rules and Reporting

7:45 – 7:55 p.m. – Session 6 Q&A

8:00 p.m. – Wrap Up & Next Steps

river NETWORK connecting people·saving rivers

waternow alliance

APPENDIX G – EXAMPLE DISCUSSION WORKSHEET

This is an example of a discussion worksheet from a Community Water Academy that can be customized and used as part of the planning process as you identify key topics to be reflected upon and discussed. This particular worksheet used topic ranking as a way to evaluate priorities and spark discussion, but other options include reflection worksheets, brainstorming worksheets, and role playing worksheets.

[CITY/TOWN NAME] COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY
GAUGING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Drinking Water & Wastewater Topics	Topic Description	How important is the topic to you? Please indicate: High, Medium, Low.	On a scale of 1-5, how important is this topic to you? 1 is most important; 5 is least important.
Information about the quality of the drinking water	It is important to have information about the quality of drinking water, including test results and whether the utility is complying with regulations. Information should be provided in a manner that the community can easily understand.		
Access to bill paying assistance programs	If a customer is having a difficult time paying their water or sewer bill, there should be programs in place to help them. The program should be well-advertised, so people know it's available and know how to access it.		
Utilities are fully staffed	The drinking water and sewer utilities need sufficient staff to run the systems. The staff should be well-paid, have opportunity for advancement, and receive regular training.		
Community involvement in utility decisions	The community should have an opportunity to learn about and provide input on utility decisions such as pipeline improvements, timing of repairs, and how community-focused programs are set up.		

Drinking Water & Wastewater Topics	Topic Description	How important is the topic to you? Please indicate: High, Medium, Low.	On a scale of 1-5, how important is this topic to you? 1 is most important; 5 is least important.
Utilities should be financially stable	The utilities need to charge rates that are sufficient to cover the cost of operating the systems, including staff salaries, and making necessary repairs and improvements. The utilities should pursue outside sources of funds, including grants, and low interest federal funds, for infrastructure projects when possible.		
Utilities are able to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies	The utilities should prepare for natural disasters such as floods, fires, and severe weather and other emergencies such as pipe or water main breaks by assessing the risks of these occurring and having a response plan. Communication between the utility and customers before, during, and after the disaster is important.		
Water system infrastructure should be checked regularly	The utilities should have a good understanding of the condition of the infrastructure that makes up the drinking water and sewer systems and have a plan to maintain the system. The utilities should regularly measure how the drinking water and sewer systems are working by monitoring such things as pressure, flow, water quality, or sewer spills.		
Utilities ask for and respond to community feedback	The utilities should reach out to customers and other stakeholders to understand their level of satisfaction with their water services, their concerns, and to provide information about the drinking water and sewer systems. The utilities need to respond to customers and other stakeholder feedback and share those responses with the community.		
Utilities support sustainable community development	The utilities take an active role in supporting community economic development and sustainability, including efficient use of water and energy and protection of the natural environment.		
Additional topics	What other areas of utility operation, safe drinking water, and/or sewer systems are of interest to you that are not included above? Please add your additional topics below and provide your prioritization on these topics.		

APPENDIX H – EXAMPLE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY EVALUATION FORM

This is an example of an evaluation form from a Community Water Academy that can be used as part of the feedback and reflection process. Evaluations help inform what resonated best, what can be adjusted for future workshops, and potential opportunities for future engagement. For communities with increased access to the internet and/or smart phones, additional features can be incorporated, e.g., QR codes that link to online surveys, etc.

COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY EVALUATION

NAME _____ _____
(OPTIONAL) FIRST LAST

CONTACT _____
(OPTIONAL) PREFERRED EMAIL ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS EVENT _____
FLYER, WORD OF MOUTH, POSTING (WHERE?)

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE COMMUNITY WATER ACADEMY: _____
ON A SCALE OF 1–10 (10 BEING MOST HELPFUL)

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE BELOW:

Session 1 – Building the Basics	Not Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
Session 2 – Safe Water and Healthy Water Systems	Not Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
Session 3 – Collaborating to Build Healthy Water Systems	Not Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
Session 4 – Report Back on Gauging Community Priorities	Not Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
Session 5 – Perspectives on Equity and Affordability	Not Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
Session 6 – Water Rules	Not Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful

***Please flip to complete other side**

If you are a [city/town name] water leader or utility manager, was the Community Water Academy helpful to you in your role?	Not Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful

Is there any information you would have liked to see, but didn't? For example, what other topics would be of interest to you?

Is there any information we could have skipped?

If you have any other feedback, please include below.