



Legislation and Communications Committee

Building Public Trust in Drinking Water

Item 6b

August 18, 2025

Building Public Trust in Drinking Water

Subject

Informational item on Building Public Trust in Drinking Water

Purpose

To provide current perspective and examples of how the water sector is engaging the public to advance trust in drinking water

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Building Public Trust in Drinking Water

*Trust is earned through
visibility, consistency,
and community-centered
service*

Overview

- ✓ Public Perceptions
- ✓ Messaging
 - ✓ Water Associations
 - ✓ Community Engagement
 - ✓ Agencies
 - ✓ Metropolitan
- ✓ Next Steps

Public Perceptions on Tap

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Public Trust in Drinking Water

*Morning Consult
on behalf of the American
Water Works Association
(AWWA), May 2024*



Water Safety and Trust



72% of respondents view the water at their home's faucets as **safe**.



There is an **increase in trust** from respondents who received recent communication besides a bill from their water utility and/or were made aware of water testing.



70% of respondents feel water utilities effectively **contribute to public health**.

<https://www.awwa.org/AWWA-Articles/u-s-survey-gauges-public-perceptions-of-tap-water/>

Status of Public Trust in Drinking Water

*Public Opinion Research
Conducted
for Metropolitan
Spring and Winter 2023*

Public Perceptions on Tap

- 74% want to hear about water quality from their water utility
- Trust in Tap Water Remains Mixed
- Transparency is key to building confidence and trust with customers
- Build the wholesaler brand



Building Public Trust in Drinking Water

*Trust is earned through
visibility, consistency, and
community-centered service*

Elements for Building Trust

- ✓ Trust Driver
- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Humanization
- ✓ Consistency
- ✓ Credibility
- ✓ Modern Accessibility

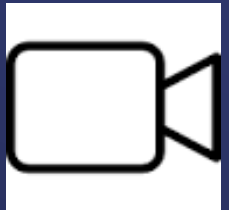


Effective Communications to build Public Trust

Source:
Pew Research Center

Modern Mediums Can Build Public Trust

- 72% of U.S. adults under 45 get local information primarily through digital video, podcasts, and social media
- Trusted formats the public engages with
 - Recognized contemporary platforms and streaming services
 - Creating more accessibility, relatability, and credibility



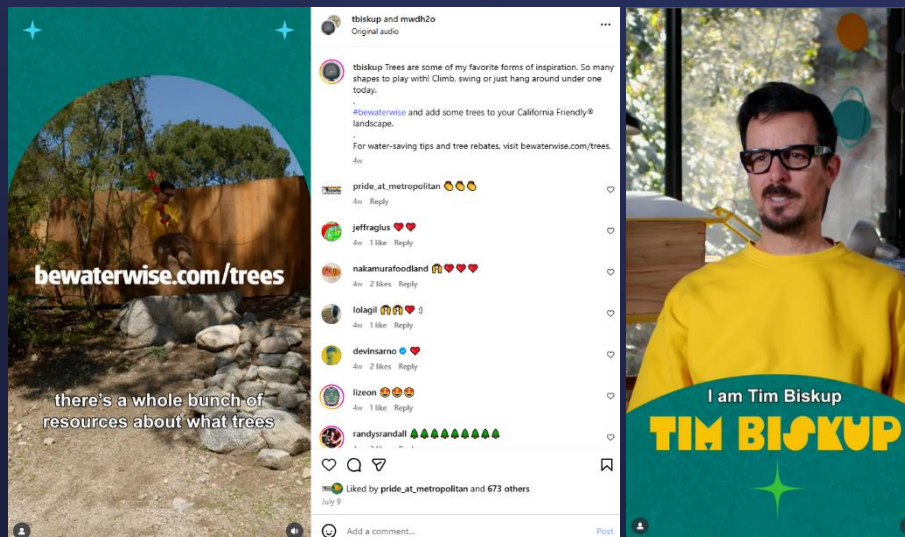
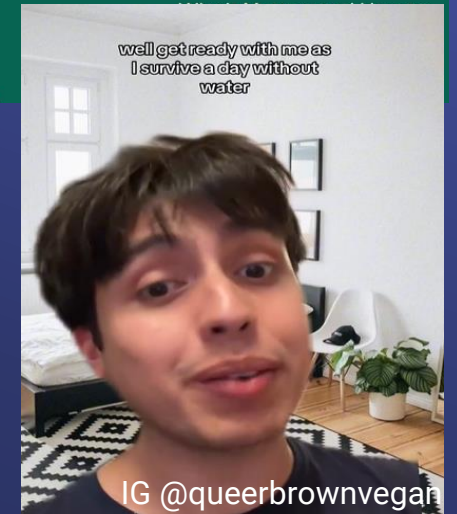
Strengthening Trust in the Tap - AWWA



American
Water
Works
Association



Strengthening Trust in the Tap – Influencer Engagement



When to consider using influencers to bolster campaigns?

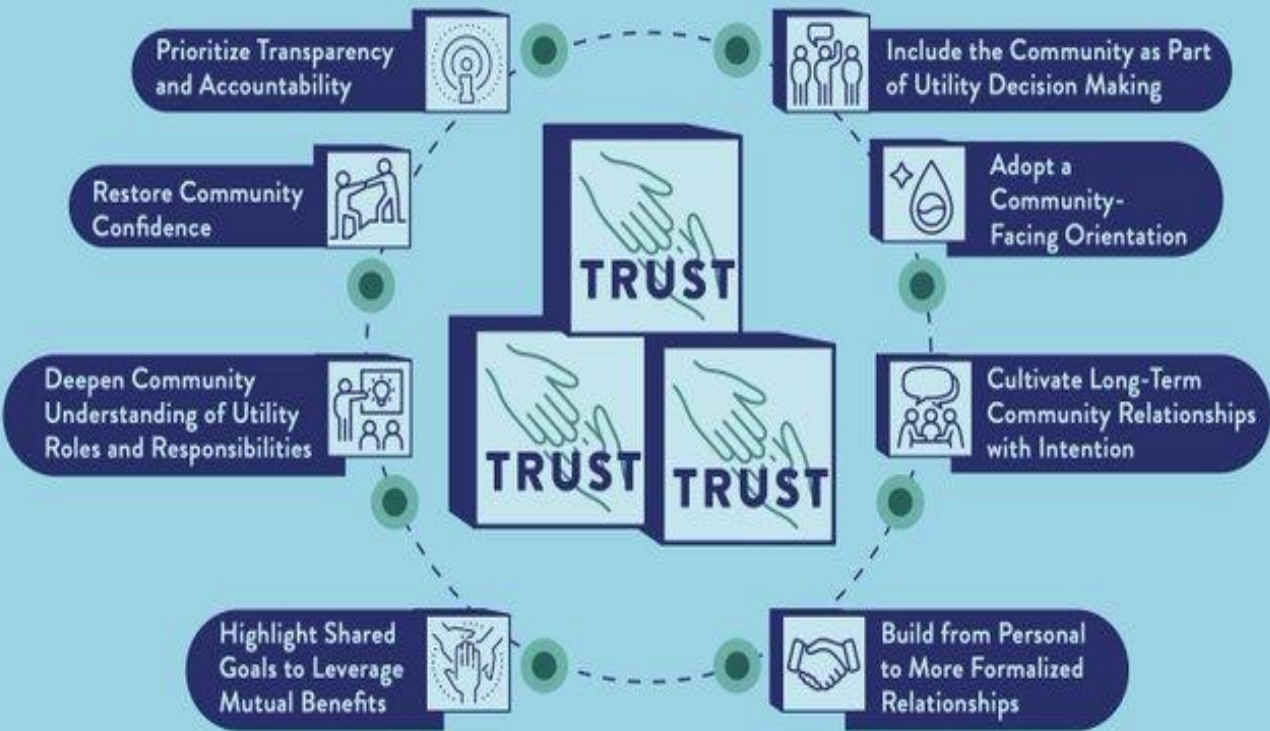
- 1) Engage new audiences through authentic connection
- 2) Boost brand visibility to reach new audiences



Strengthening Trust in the Tap - Community Engagement

BUILDING BLOCKS OF TRUST: CREATING AUTHENTIC AND EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND WATER UTILITIES

FOUNDATIONS OF TRUST EIGHT FOUNDATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND BUILDING BLOCKS



Building Trust Between Water Utilities & Community Organizations

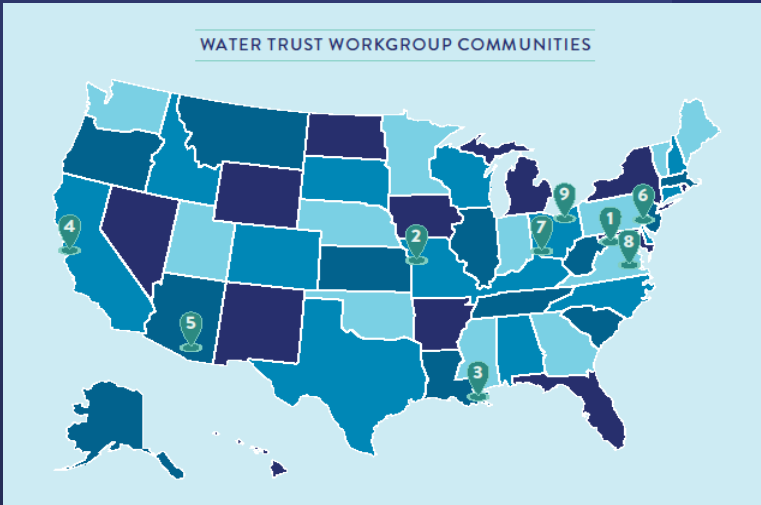
Watch later

Building Trust Between Water Utilities & Community Organizations

river NETWORK
connecting people · saving rivers

Watch on YouTube

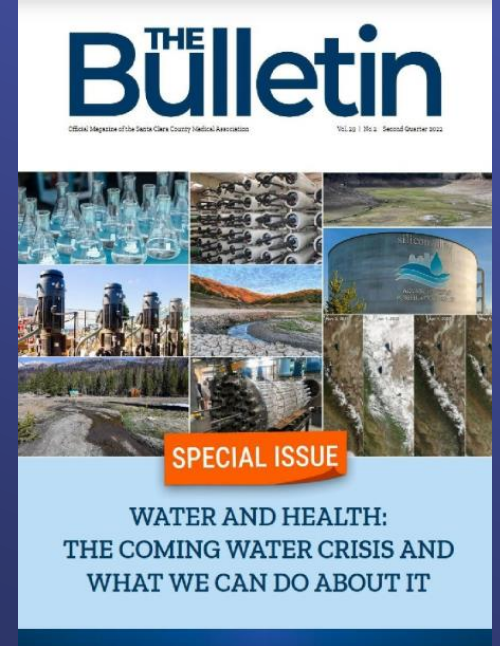
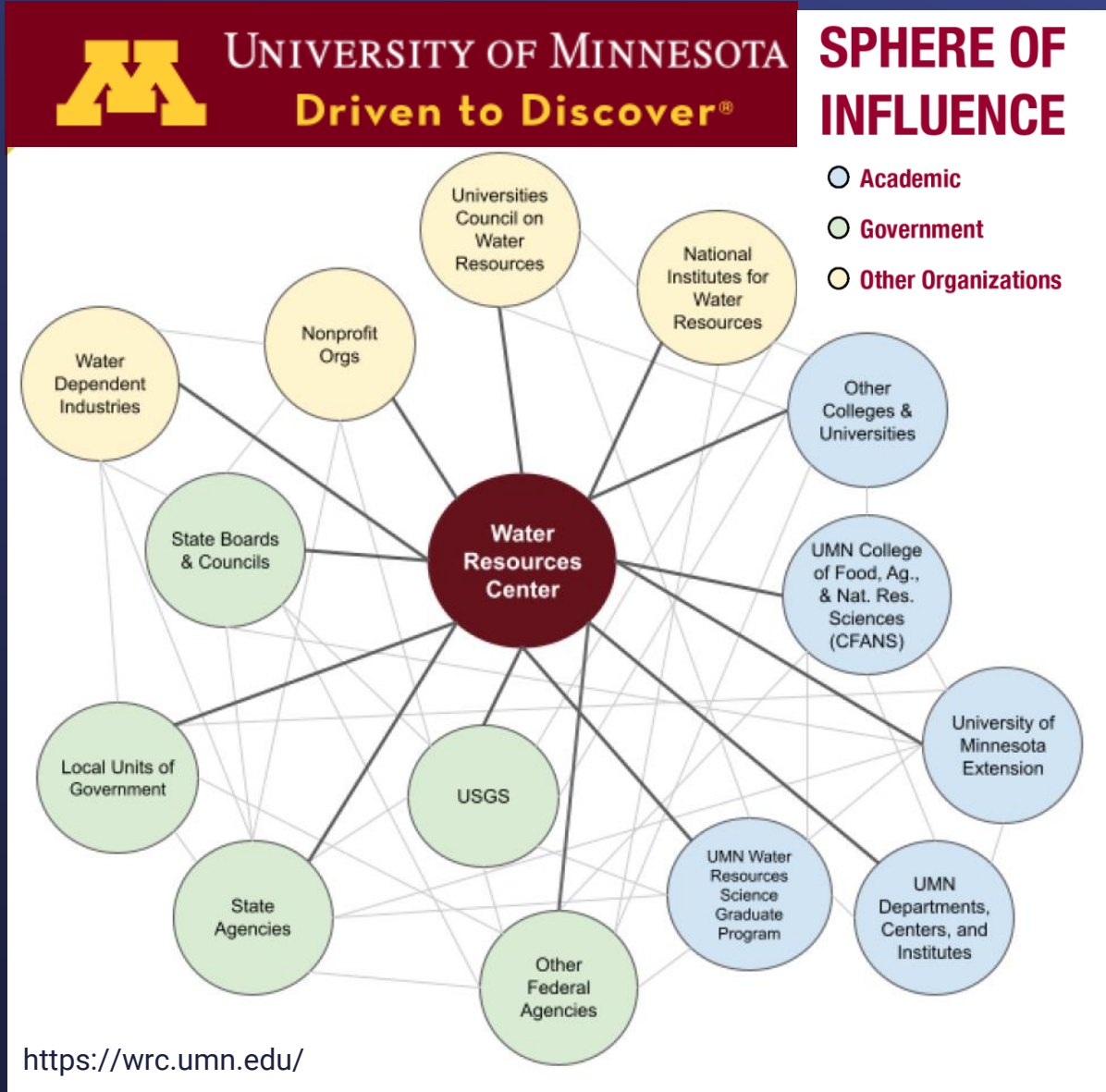
BUILDING BLOCKS OF TRUST
CREATING AUTHENTIC AND EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND WATER UTILITIES



waternow alliance

river NETWORK
connecting people · saving rivers

Strengthening Trust in the Tap - Community Engagement



Public Health and
Medical Community Initiative
Building Public Acceptance Among
and Health Professionals



Strengthening Trust in the Tap – Agency Examples

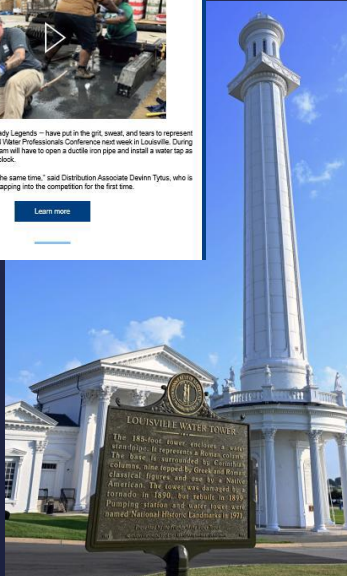
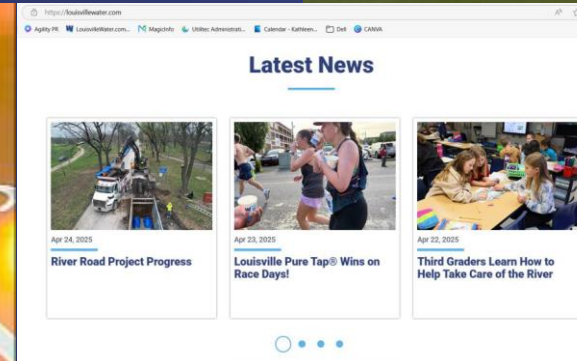


PHILADELPHIA
WATER
— DEPARTMENT —



<https://water.phila.gov/>

Strengthening Trust in the Tap – Agency Examples



August 18, 2025

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<https://louisvillewater.com/>
Item #6b Slide 13

Strengthening Trust in the Tap – Agency Examples



[Sdcwa.org/water-here-for-life/](https://www.sdcwa.org/water-here-for-life/)

<https://www.lvmwd.com/our-services/drinking-water/lv-tap>

August 18, 2025

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Item #6b Slide 14

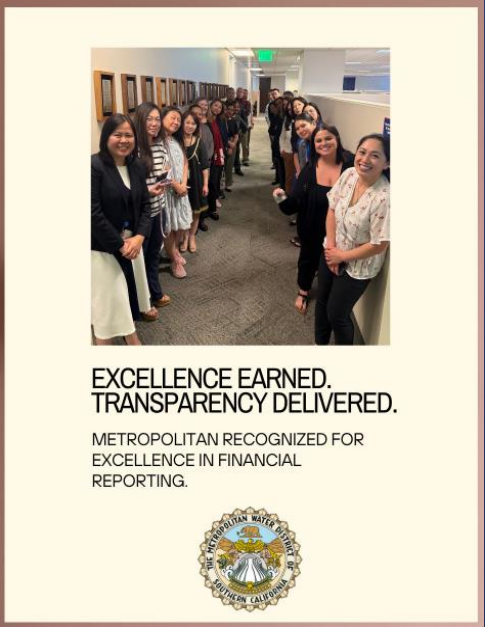
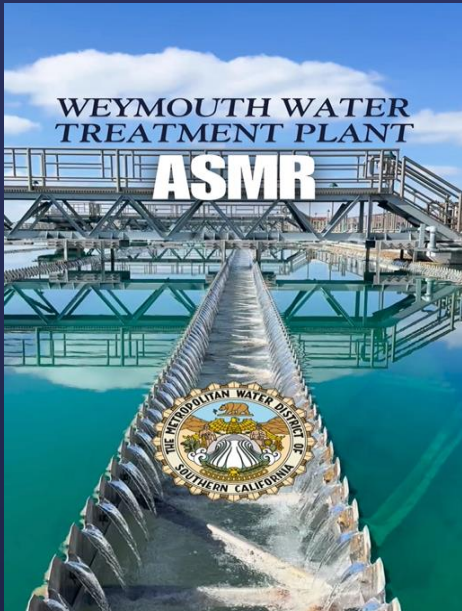


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Metropolitan Activities

History
Water Quality
Infrastructure
Conservation
Employees
Education
Research
Inspection Trips
Public Meetings
Community Events

Building Public Trust by Telling Our Story



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Potential Ideas for Building Public Trust

Goal to increase

- Accessibility
- Relatability
- Credibility

Next Steps



- Board input on key trust building topics
- Consider potential ideas to build wholesaler/retail trust and expand engagement:
 - Continue dialogue on regional collaboration opportunities with member agencies
 - Build on CAMP4W engagement with community-based organizations
 - Explore strategic cross-sector collaborations beyond the water sector to enhance water education, workforce, and outreach
 - Discuss potential opportunities (e.g. ambassadors, speakers bureau, regional storytelling)
- Continue research on public attitudes and key issues

