

The background of the slide is a photograph of a large, yellow-painted steel truss bridge spanning a body of water. The bridge has two prominent towers. In the foreground, the water is calm, reflecting the bridge and the sky. Several small boats are visible in the distance. The sky is a clear, light blue. Overlaid on the top left of the image is the text 'The Utility Management Conference™' in a large, sans-serif font. 'The' is in a smaller size above 'Utility'. 'Utility' is in blue, while 'Management' and 'Conference™' are in black. To the right of this text, 'AWWA | WEF' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

# The Utility Management Conference™

AWWA | WEF



## Recruiting and Retaining a Qualified Workforce Summary of Workshop

*Workshop presented on March 28, 2023*

*UMC, Sacramento, CA*



# Format of Workshop

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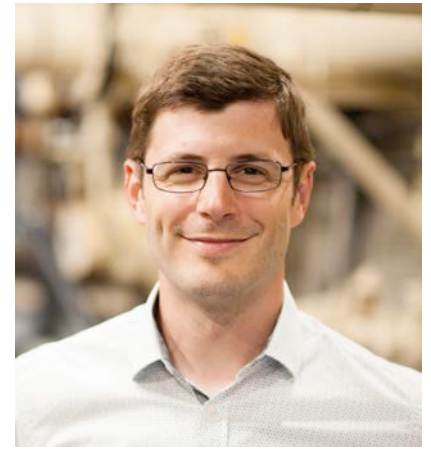
- Introduction – Cheryl Davis
- Panel One – Collaboration between Water Sector and Educational Institutions followed by table discussions
- Panel Two – Recruitment of Veterans followed by Table Discussion
- Lunch/Networking
- Panel Three – Factors in Recruitment and Retention of Employees followed by Table Discussions
- Panel Four – Collaboration in the Water Sector at the National, State and Regional Levels followed by table discussions
- Close of Workshop – Robert Scott



# Presenters for Panel One

## Collaboration between Water Sector and Educational Institutions

- **Catherine Curtis** – SFPUC – CBTS Lead and Workforce Specialist - [Internships](#)
- **Shane Zonder** – Ft. Worth Water Utility – Workforce Initiatives Manager – [IE Apprenticeship and High School Partnership](#)
- **Sherri Jones** – City of Charlotte Workforce Manager – [City of Charlotte Workforce and Career Development Apprenticeship Programs](#)
- **Cindy Goodburn** - Cindy Goodburn Consulting – Chair of the AWWA Workforce Strategies Committee – [Collaboration Between Community Colleges and Utilities](#)
- **Jordan Damerel** - Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District – Chair, Bay Area Consortium for Water/Wastewater Education – [From Community College to Water Sector Jobs](#)



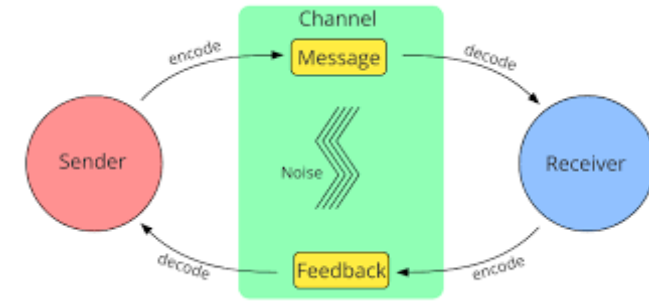


- Big Concern – How to fit these types of programs into a union environment and how to integrate Apprenticeship Programs so that they are not a union job threat.

- Unions should be integrated in the development (including the right size and skills) so that the right candidates who became apprentices are set to become full-time employees.

# Suggestions in the Discussion

- Immersion of the trainees into the whole utility framework
- Possible regional collaboration with rotating internships
- Reinforce the communication on the benefits of having apprenticeship programs
- Explanation of the transitions to full union employees by showing what the ladder looks like
- Allowance of later moves between departments as well as career progressions
- Both internal and external champions and management support
- **Strong communication in community outreach, as well as between the utilities, union and the educational institutions was deemed to be critical to the success of these training and apprenticeship programs.**



# Internships

- Community Benefit Internships – Lead to Apprenticeship – Great REDI (Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Program).
- Challenges – inadequate initial pay structures, inflexible job requirements, culture (still seen as good old boy network).
- Success factors = Flexibility in workforce roles, flexibility in hiring requirements, and BUY IN from the TOP! Strong leadership is key!
- Resource – Internship Guidance Manual  
<https://www.baywork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/BAYWORK-Internship-Guidebook2.pdf>
- **MORE INTERNSHIPS ARE NEEDED!**



# Apprenticeship Programs



Apprenticeship programs are culture shifts for hiring, training, and retaining the workforce



The City of Charlotte reimagined the process and looked at **apprenticeships as a long-term solution**, as one of the 21 departments, Charlotte Water established its first apprenticeship program in 2018



Conduct a needs and job analysis across your organization to identify Apprenticeable positions



Structure your program so that it is compliant with the department of labor standards according to the occupation



I/E Apprenticeship – Ft. Worth – Apprentice I and Apprentice II positions, 3 FT Positions, two-year program, addresses a historically hard to fill position, aligns with a future career ladder.



Partnership between utility, FWISD (school district), and Tarrant County College.



# Community College Connections

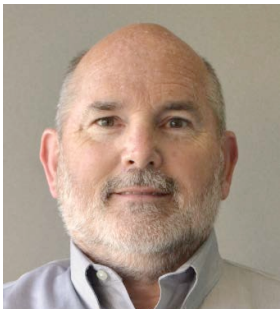
- BACWWE is focused on growing the water/wastewater candidate pool
- Collaboration between Arapahoe Community College and Castle Rock Utilities in Colorado for Apprenticeship Program, Department of Labor Approved.
- Challenges include: No F/T College W/WW faculty, Student Geographical Distribution, Teaching for the test, Certificates verses as-needed education, turning students into employees.
- Advise for others – in-house champion for apprenticeship program, do your homework, succession planning, work with HR, research other successful programs, partner with local college, start small, get management support, and be flexible.



# Presenters for Panel Two

## Recruitment of Veterans

- **Steven Garner** – PMP – CAE – ICE-CCP – Certification Manager – CA-NV AWWA – Chair, AWWA/WEF Veterans Initiative Subcommittee – Founder – CA-NV AWWA VET Committee – Veteran Recruitment Programs.
- **Don Jones** – Cuyamaca College, Chief Architect Center for Water Studies – Warriors2WaterWorks Campaign Coordinator – Recruiting and Training – Transitioning Military and Veterans
- **Freddie Armijo** – Project Manager and Physical Security Officer at City of Riverside Public Utilities – Chair, CA-NV AWWA VET committee – Veterans in the Water Industry
- **Paul Rheault** – Jacobs, Director of NW O&M, NW (MT, ID, WA, OR) – Member of Jacobs VetNet – Military & Veterans in O&M
- **Leslie Cloer** – SPHR – SHRM-SCP – CPM, Training and Development Manager, North Texas Municipal Water District – Recruiting Retaining Military Talent.

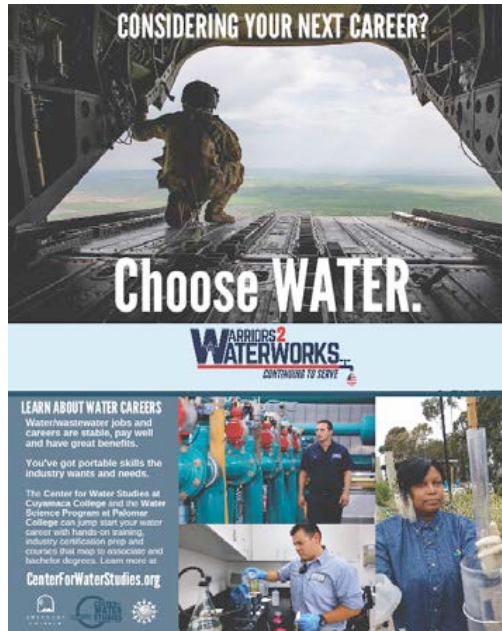


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Jones.



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Leslie Cloer

# Challenges



- Lack of veteran awareness of the opportunities in the water sector, designing effective outreach methods.
- Look for opportunities to work with veteran's transition programs, such as the Skill Bridge Program.
- Engage veterans in the water sector to become champions for veteran initiatives.
- Be open and flexible in the hiring process – vets could be brought in at a higher level.
- Spouses of veterans are a big untapped source for staff.
- RED TAPE – getting access to the right people to build relationships
- Job titles may not be a direct fit, so a different approach is needed.
- Language barrier (terms common to military vs. water industry).



# Veterans are a Good Fit for Water

- Attributes that make this group a good fit include core values, understanding and mission orientation, training in following orders and taking direction – command structure, and their understanding of the importance of meeting schedules and protecting the community.
- They are already engaged in competency-based training within their military branch, and many already have the technical skills, and mechanical, electrical and electronics aptitude to meet the needs of water sector organizations.
- These highly trained and very skilled people are familiar with on-the-job training (OJT), already have excellent safety training, are dependable, understand a command structure, and many are often serious-minded leaders in their respective arenas, which translates extremely well into the water sector.





# Veteran Recruitment Success

Some programs have had good success with veteran recruitment by using a variety of tools at their disposal:

- ☐ A separate hiring page for veterans
- ☐ Open houses to talk about opportunities and how veterans can translate their experience into jobs in the water industry
- ☐ Career transition services at their local military bases
- ☐ Chambers of Commerce can get data on veterans in the area
- ☐ Working with base career command counselors to focus on the skills available and needed
- ☐ Working with the local VFW, AMVETs, local vet groups to let them know about local opportunities

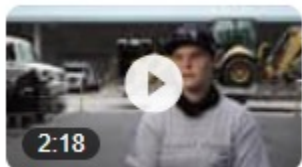




# More Success Strategies

Other strategies:

- Addressing language using a variety of translator tools
- Discovering social media groups where veterans congregate
- Collaboration with organizations with shared purpose of serving veterans
- Produce Recruitment Videos
- Working with HR to develop pathways to reach veterans and their spouses
- The checklist approach
- SHRM Foundation Veterans Ambassador Program



Great careers for military veterans in the water and wastewater ...

Vimeo · Ron & Karen Cook  
Aug 22, 2020

# Presenters for Panel Three

## Factors in Recruitment and Retention

- **Zakiya Seymour** – Ph.D – PE – Arcadis – Workforce and Business Transformation, The Race for Talent.
- **Matt Collings** – PE – Moulton Nigel Water District – Assistant General Manager and Treasurer – Cultivating a Positive Workforce Culture.
- **Rhonda E. Harris** – P.E. – P. Eng – BCEE – PMP – MIAM – F. WEF – Director O&M/Asset Management Consulting Services – Brown and Caldwell – Compensation Pay Structures
- **Gwendolyn Hargrove Ruff** – SPHR – SVP – Columbus Water Works – Post-COVID Total Compensation and Benefits Programs
- **Donna Mancuso** – SHRM-SCP - Deputy CEO for Administration – Suffolk County Water Authority – Organization Culture – Benefits other than Compensation



# Highlights

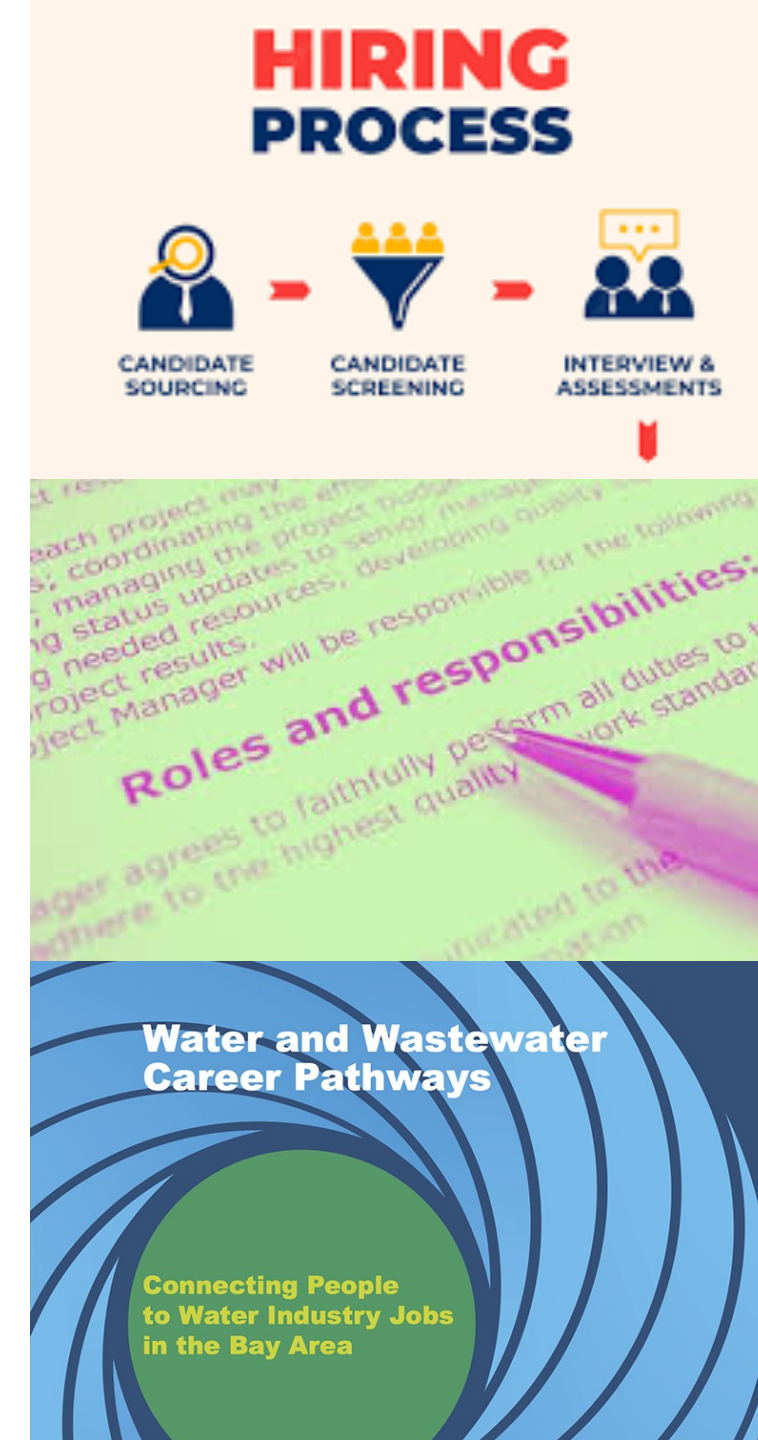
- Many water sector organizations are part of a bigger municipal organization, and the HR department of the municipality may have limited understanding of the specific needs of the water sector.
- Partnering with the HR Department will many times be a challenge, but successful partnering will result in a greater successful impact overall.
- The water sector has begun to take a look at the benefits and flexibility of their compensation programs.
- Younger employees are focused on the \$\$ per hour of direct pay and are not as concerned about the long-term retirement benefits when they first come into the sector.
- High turnover in the HR department means loss of institutional knowledge.
- The market has changed, so that there are more jobs than qualified candidates.
- Do you have a program for reclassification, promotion and development, and how does your pay structure reflect your choices?
- Post pandemic mental health issues for staff were discussed at length
- Investment in employees was also a hot topic, with many participants discussing their challenges to adjustments in these key success factors in employee retention.
- One Utility took **353 days** to hire a candidate. We have to do better.



# Critical to the Success of Recruitment and Retention

Several items and opportunities were discussed as critical to the success of recruitment and retention:

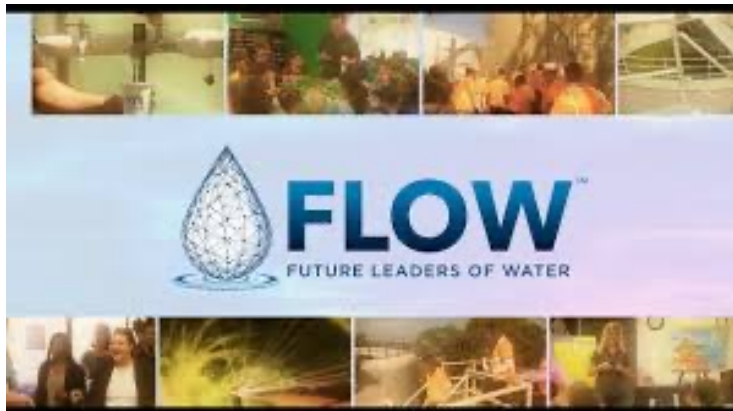
- Consistent updating of **job descriptions** to meet current needs;
- Rethinking and assessing the selection process, building a business relationship between the water organization the HR department,
- Rethinking organization expectations,
- **Creating career paths** within a classification series so that managers can hire at a lower level and grow their staff (which expands the supply of candidates),
- **Shorten the hiring process**, so that potential candidates are not waiting 3 to 6 months for a job callback,
- Create a positive organizational culture (this is why people stay or leave) and
- The culture/mission/compensation nexus must be complementary.





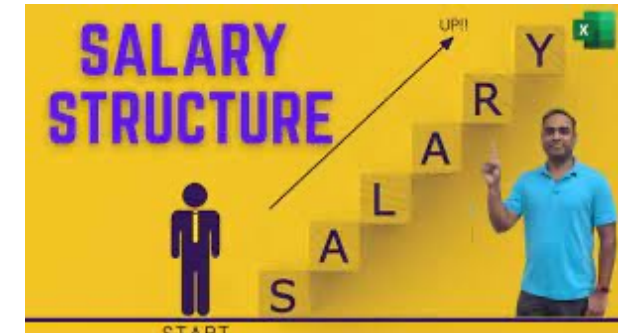
# Culture Discussion

- Organization Culture – Challenge – accessibility of leadership and information, engagement for organizational awareness, opportunity to try-learn-grow, accountability – set a standard and hold people to it.
- The innovation – Succession Doing (Brand Ambassadors), HERO Model, leadership academy, Future Leaders of Water (FLOW).
- The Results – Top Workplace in Orange County and USA, fostering a strong and healthy culture, Building resiliency by embracing change.



# Compensation/Pay Structures

- There are multiple pay structures in the water sector including: Contract pay with no benefits, Internships and apprenticeships, part-time programs with partial benefits, and full-time employment with full benefits.
- Most common methods used to design salary range structures include:
  - Market Pricing, Point Factor, Combination
  - Traditional –numerous layers and pay grades (82%)
  - Broadband –fewer pay structures with wider salary ranges(7%)
- Salary Reviews range from none to annual to 3 years
- All organizations need to assess their pay structures regularly to develop the best for their employees. Don't be afraid to change if something will fit you better.
- Organizations need more flexibility in their job structures as we saw when we went through Covid.
- This Covid-forced structure change showed that some specific positions can have significant flexibility, while others do not allow for any at all. Non-Essential vs Essential positions.



# Compensation in a Post COVID World

- Remote Work and Flex Hours
- Mental Wellness is Health Wellness
- Childcare challenges and elder care options
- Engaging and energizing employees
- Be flexible and responsive
- Solicit input and ideas from employees  
Conduct employee surveys
- Create a culture of trust and organizational pride
- Increase engagement
- Being empathetic to employee needs and expectations The “sandwich generation”



## Challenge

- ## Culture Transformation

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# Presenters for Panel Four

## Collaboration at the National, State and Regional Level

- **Steve Dye** – Legislative Director – WEF – [Funding Resources](#)
- **Barb Martin** – Director of Engineering and Technical Services – AWWA – [Workforce Programs](#)
- **Chad Wilbanks** – Director of Training and Technology – The Water Tower – [Workforce Development Programs](#)
- **Lisa Dye** – Director of Human Resources – Inland Empire Utilities Agency – [Regional Collaboration in the Inland Empire](#)
- **Art Simonian** – Steering Committee Member of the Work for Water New England Strategic Planning Process – Executive Director of Mattabassett District in Cromwell Connecticut – [Work for Water New England](#).
- **Robert Scott** – BAYWORK President – Valley Water Technical Training Program Administrator – [BAYWORK – A Regional Collaboration](#)



**Regional collaborations can bring benefits by highlighting the water sector as an opportunity to a variety of future candidates.**

**Suggested activities included the following:**

- ☐ Participate at middle and high schools career days, to introduce students to the water sector,
- ☐ Build regionally based training programs, such as BAYWORK, which reduces the “stealing” of employees from each other,
- ☐ Participation in diversity, equity and inclusion programs to reach candidates that may not have realized the opportunities available in the water sector,
- ☐ Allow for flexible work conditions,
- ☐ Generate a pool of “fresh” candidates, rather than recycling staff between organizations,
- ☐ Work together with local water organizations as a team to open doors to a larger pool of new candidates,
- ☐ Provide opportunities for smaller organizations with limited resources in the areas of training and recruitment services, and
- ☐ Engage in social media, including tagging other agencies on social media posts.





# Highlights

- You need a **CHAMPION** to initiate, inspire, and move organizations to develop and initiate regional and state collaboration initiatives.
- **Partnering with the state and regional level professional organizations**, such as the American Water Works Association (AWWA) sections, the Water Environment Federation (WEF) member associations, state level Society of Human Resources Managers (SHRM) chapters, and others will really assist with building the regional collaboration needed to identify, plan, develop and implement programs to benefit all of the participants.
- If you live in the San Francisco Bay Area, **BAYWORK** is a collaborative that has been around since 2009 and focuses on candidate development and training staff, [baywork.org](http://baywork.org). All materials from their website are free source as their contribution to the water industry.

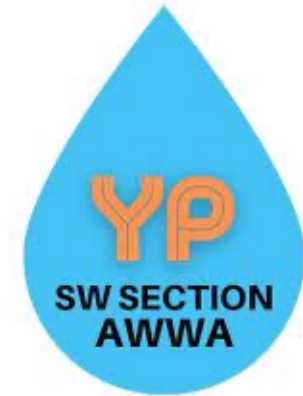
# Funding Sources

- EPA Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant Program
- DW & CW State Revolving Funds
- US Dept. of Labor: *Funded in FY23 YouthBuild* – opportunity youth focused
  - Strengthen Comm. Colleges Training – “in-demand industries”
  - Apprenticeship Building America – “Registered Apprenticeship Program”
  - Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs
  - Good Jobs Initiative



# Workforce Programs - AWWA

- Veterans Initiative
- Operator scholarships
- Standardization/reciprocity
- Transformative Water Leadership Academy
- Knowledge transfer
- YP/student programs
- Value of Water and water professions





# THE WATER TOWER

<https://www.theh2otower.org/>

- Two programs focused on introducing individuals to the water industry and providing a career path. **Work-study**-follows a senior through their last year of high school. After successful completed of graduation requirements and the work-study program, students can sit for the license exam and begin a career in the water industry.
- **Trainee**-Includes anyone who has successfully completed Highschool or obtained their GED. Unlike the work-study program which takes about eight months, the Trainee program can be completed in three to four months.
- **Both programs follow the same needs to know criteria for the State of Georgia licensing Board.**



# Regional Collaboration in the Inland Empire

- Grant funding through US Department of Education and the CA High Road Training Partnership
- Regional workforce training consortium that includes educational institutions
- Internships, pre-apprenticeships, mentorships
- Equitable pathways

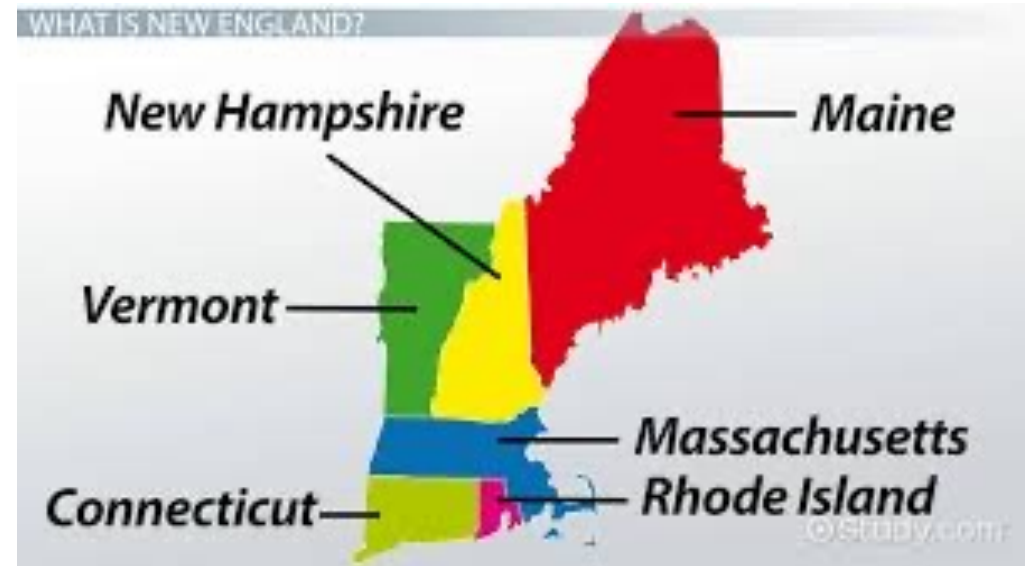


\$ Grant Funding



# Strategic Planning Process to Create Work for Water-New England

- Combined effort of drinking water, clean water, and stormwater service providers in six states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine)
- A two-tier planning structure (a Leadership Group and a Steering Committee)
- Using multiple methods to define and prioritize needs (including a Needs Assessment form developed by WEF and AWWA)
- Funded by New England drinking water and clean water service providers



NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT

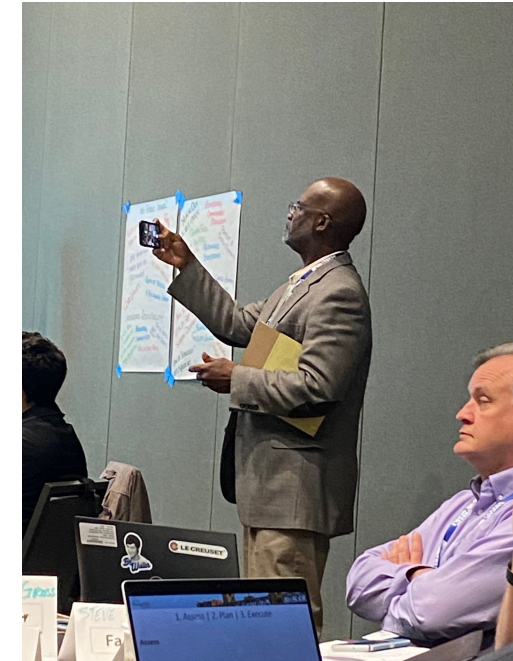


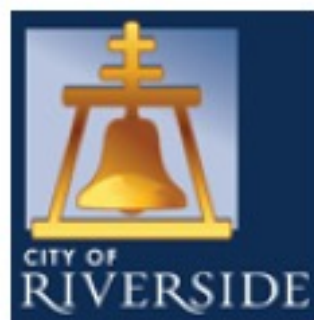
FUNDING

- Baywork is a consortium of over 40 water/wastewater agencies and stakeholders with a shared commitment to workforce reliability. Began in June 2009.
- [Baywork.org](http://Baywork.org) – all materials are free source
- Challenges include geographic distances between signatory agencies, maintaining volunteer committee participation, and keeping things together and moving forward.

## Lessons Learned

- SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS - SUB-REGIONAL EVENTS
- ENGAGE NEW SIGNATORIES EARLY - CONSTANT RECRUITING - RECOGNIZE WHAT'S HOT
- CO-LEADERSHIP OF COMMITTEES - HIRE A MANAGER





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# QUESTIONS



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Workforce Reliability

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