2019 Rural Community Water Managers Leadership Institute: Outcomes and Reflections for Future Institutes

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SECTION I – Introduction

Residents of disadvantaged rural communities (DACs) in California's San Joaquin Valley often find it challenging to participate and effectively lead their communities in regard to water quality and quantity issues that they face. These challenges are due to a lack of specific training, resources, and capacity - not a lack of heart, community knowledge or ability. To help build leadership capacity and gain water management tools, building off previous leadership institutes that focused on community leadership and building technical, managerial and financial capacity, Self-Help Enterprises' (SHE) Community Engagement and Planning team launched the first-of-its-kind 2019 Rural Communities Water Managers Leadership Institute (Institute).

The institute curriculum was designed after a thorough community review and stakeholder process that included a stakeholder survey and three two-hour focus groups (see stakeholder perspectives and recommendations report from September 2018) as well as a follow-up stakeholder meeting to review the results of the report and discuss a curriculum outline. Upon finalizing the curriculum outline, SHE began conducting outreach to recruit participants (see Section VII). Ultimately, 14 residents from 10 DACs in four counties graduated from the Institute which ran from March to August 2019, meeting one Saturday per month for 6.5 hours (see Section II).

The six-month Leadership Institute program was offered at no charge thanks to the generous support from the Central Valley Community Foundation, USDA Rural Development, and the State Department of Water Resources. The Institute, which was entirely bilingual (English and Spanish), included a variety of formats including classroom trainings/workshops, breakout sessions, group discussions and site visits and also featured various guest speakers/experts.

The Institute was focused on helping increasing community participating on water management and planning, expanding beyond local management of drinking water systems to consider the ways that regional watershed management and other water users and uses impact local level water conditions. To this end participants learned about specific water management programs such as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program as well as more generally about state funding mechanisms, water policy and legislative advocacy. Participants learned about the "participation gap" of low-income communities in local, regional and state water management and discussed ways the rural communities can take on leadership roles in water at all of these levels.

This report is intended to document the outcomes and lessons learned from the 2019 Rural Communities Water Managers Leadership Institute with the intention of building on these lessons in future years. The report is structured as follows: Section II covers Institute participation and attendance. Section III covers each of the six Institute sessions individually, reviewing the agenda, results from each sessions end-of-day evaluations and staff and participant reflections on session highlights and challenges. Section IV assesses the immediate impact of the Institute on participants, both in regard to water management knowledge as well as skills for participating and leading in water management.

Section V, in turn, considers the potential long-term impact of the Institute on regional water management in the form of increasing community participation and representation in water decision-making in the Central Valley and California as a whole. Section VI provides a summary of all of these findings in the form of a conclusion, considering the ways in which the Institute met SHE and participants objectives and the ways that it did not. The final section, Section VII, provides recommendations based on the findings.

SECTION II – Institute Participation

Attendance and graduation

Of 36 applications received, 26 participants were selected to join the first cohort. However, seven of those applicants never attended a single session. Attendance over the course of the six sessions for these nineteen participants who attended at least one session was variable, averaging 3.6 sessions per participant. Five of the nineteen attended only one session. One attended two session, three attended three session and two attended four session. Eight participants attended five or more sessions, five of which attended every session.

Of the nineteen applicants that started the program, 13 graduated, meaning that they attended at least four of the six sessions. The Institute translator, Reyna Castellanos, also was awarded a diploma, having attended and participated in the majority of sessions. The 13 graduates represented 10 DACs in Fresno, Tulare, Kings and Kern counties.

An additional 17 individuals participated in one or more sessions, primarily guests of current participants. Multiple of these individuals expressed interest in completing the full Institute next year.

Non-completion

Out of the seven accepted applicants who never attended a single session, five were from smaller communities and two were from larger cities. Four of the seven never responded to emails, calls or voicemails; the other three said they would attend but did not show up. In retrospect, it appeared as though they did not know exactly what the Institute was and were therefore less interested/committed to attending.

Of the seven participants who attended at least one session but did not graduate from the Institute, approximately five provided an explanation. Two participants had work conflicts for a few sessions and felt they had missed too much information once they could attend. One had personal conflicts on most of the dates of the Institute. Overall, once a participant missed one or two sessions, they tended to feel that they got too behind to return again.

Accessibility

When asked on the Institute evaluation how easy it was for them to attend the Institute sessions on a scale of 1 to 5, the average response was 4.5 (11 responses total), indicating relatively high degree of access. Important to note, however, is that given the timing of the evaluation, these 11 respondents are those that completed to the program, which itself indicates access was less of an issue for them than their non-completing counterparts. When asked to elaborate on the accessibility of the program several participants mentioned the challenge of unforeseen family/personal matters which will undoubtedly always be an issue for training programs such as this that require a significant time commitment. Two respondents mentioned their long travel times to and from the sessions as a challenge. The provision of Spanish-language interpretation was noted as important accessibility accommodation that was appreciated.

SECTION III – Institute Sessions

Session One

The 2019 Leadership Institute was kicked off on Saturday, March 23, 2019 at the Self-Help Enterprises office in Visalia, CA. Participants took part in a variety of activities and workshops that covered topics including water conditions in the Central Valley, an introduction to water management and planning programs, and community participation in regional water management programs.

During the first workshop, <u>Water Conditions in the Central Valley</u>, participants were given a brief overview of the water cycle and historical issues in the Central Valley as well as the issues that affect communities, agriculture and the environment during drought or flooding periods. Participants were encouraged to think about and discuss the issues that were present in their community, had affected their community in the past, and which could be issues in the future. In small groups, participants analyzed specific issues and presented potential causes and solutions for that issue.

The second workshop, <u>Introduction to Water Management and Planning Programs</u>, provided information about the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program, and other programs such as Storm Water Resources Plans and Countywide Drought and Water Shortage Contingency Plans. In the next session of the Leadership Institute, participants received more in depth information about the components of each program and ways to get involved.

In the third workshop, three water leaders shared their experience participating in water management programs, like SGMA and IRWM, and the importance of having DACs participate in these programs. Participants then reflected on their vision for their own community and started to build plans on how water management programs could help in achieving some of those goals. In future sessions, participants returned to their plans and added in more information as they learned more about water management programs.

Ratings: Session one had an overall rating of 4.2 out of 5. Introduction to water management and planning programs was the highest rated section, although not by much, with an average rating of 4.5 (Water conditions in the Central Valley and Community participation in water management and planning sections both received an average rating of 4.1).

Highlights/strengths: Various participants expressed appreciation for learning about other valley communities and finding similarities in their community water management goals. Many also expressed appreciation for the new and informative information provided in the sessions including learning more about SGMA and funding opportunities.

Comments and recommendations from participants: Among the recommendations provided by participants were considering shortening the sessions by one hour, consider recording the sessions for future reference/use and allocate more time getting to know and interacting with each other would have been helpful, particularly more time spent identifying participants role/interest in water management (e.g. who is on a water board, what are their water challenges etc.).

Staff reflections and lessons learned:
- That some participants came late and missed some or all of the introductions was unfortunate. Perhaps introductions could be done after the first agenda section or some time at the beginning of agenda could be dedicated to completing assessments/forms etc. to give a bit more buffer.
- Leave more time for self-introductions and get-to-know-each other activities perhaps with multiple people or in small groups. Could consider an ice breaker game oriented around their communities or water. For example, one idea would be a bingo sheet where they have to find people to fill out squares (e.g. Community Services District, has been on board for long time, was elected in a competitive election etc.)
- The first session felt very content heavy and participants seemed overly tired towards the end. Scale back the material and move some content to other sessions.
- Diversify the presentation style to overdoing classroom style lectures (this will also help with the content overload problem).
- Consider having residents share their "story of self" and their community and or identify the strengths of the group and partner participants.
- Focus session one on getting to know each other and the challenges that exist locally, regionally and statewide. Create opportunities for participants to learn from each other, share resources and ideas.
- Have participants complete the pre-assessment prior to the session to save time.
- Incorporate the water needs of Tribes and the environment into the water management overview sections. Invite representatives to speak on these issues.
- More could have been done in the session to clarify how regional water management is similar/different to water management activities at the community/water board level.

Session Two

The second session of the Institute was held on April 27, 2019 at the Self-Help Enterprises office. Workshops and discussions covered topics that included State water management agencies and their roles, the political dimensions of water in the Central Valley, and a more in depth look at water management programs at the State, regional, and local level.

During the first workshop, California Water Management, participants received information about the key players in the water management world and their roles and responsibilities.

Agencies and individuals included the Governor, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), County governments, local water districts, and others. In addition to the information shared, participants also reviewed two programs, the Human Right to Water Act (HR2W) and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), to discuss how to determine which agencies may be involved and what their roles were.

The second session of the day, Political Dimensions of Water Management, explored why different water interests are involved in water management and allowed participants to share their experiences in a variety of meetings and settings. The session was shaped as a discussion where participants were able to sit in small groups to discuss issues they have faced and solutions with their peers.

The afternoon sessions involved two breakout sessions with three options for participants to select, and they were provided more information about the different water management programs. In the SGMA presentation, participants learned about the different components of Groundwater Sustainability Plans and discussed the challenges and opportunities of development of these plans for rural communities. In the IRWM presentation, participants reviewed information about a community project funded by IRWM, new funding opportunities, and the Disadvantaged Community Involvement program in different funding areas. In the Storm Water Resources Plans and General Plans presentation, participants learned more about how storm water could be used as an asset, how counties develop general and community plans, and the different components of community plans.

Ratings: Session two had an overall rating of 4.5 out of 5. As with session one, all sections have an average rating of 4 or higher. The SGMA breakout had the highest rating of 4.7. Drought planning had the lowest at 4.2. State water management, understanding stakeholder interests, and the IRWM breakout had average ratings of 4.6, 4.5 and 4.5 respectively.

Highlights/strengths: Across the board participants reported learning a ton during session two and being extremely happy with the material provided. Many also noted liking the group discussions and breakout sessions.

Comments and recommendations from participants: The majority of participants did not provide recommendations for improving session two but two recommendations included in the day's

evaluations were to reduce the amount of paper distributed and to incorporate more small group discussions.

Staff reflections and lessons learned:
- Participants really enjoyed the breakout sessions. Consider how these could potentially take the place of the intro to water management and planning section from session one.
- Some repetition between sessions one and two could probably be avoided.
- Incorporate drought, county and land use planning more fully throughout. Invite speakers on these topics.
- Add more group activities or projects.

Session Three

The third session of the Leadership Institute took place on May 18, 2019. During this session, participants learned about different funding sources, the efforts of a local irrigation district to help groundwater sustainability, and participated in three breakout sessions about project development and funding guidelines.

During the first workshop, Funding Programs and Requirements, participants learned about different funding sources at the State, Federal, and Regional/Local level. The workshop provided information such as eligible entities for each source of funding, funding types, minimum and maximum funding levels, and eligible projects. They also received information about sources that provide funding to regional water management and planning efforts, such as the Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant and the Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program. Additionally, participants received information about technical assistance available to support DAC outreach and education and access to regional funding sources.

After the first workshop, participants visited the Tulare Irrigation District office to learn about the District's effort to improve groundwater within their boundaries. During the presentation, Aaron Fukuda, General Manager of TID, discussed the partnership between TID and the community of Okieville that was formed to install a recharge basin near the community to provide multiple benefits to the community and other stakeholders. He also informed about TID's involvement in SGMA and their effort to improve groundwater sustainability. Participants completed the site visit with a short walk to the District's onsite recharge basin.

In the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to choose two workshops during the breakout sessions. Option one, Exploring Multi-Benefit Project Opportunities, allowed participants to learn about the importance and benefit of multi-benefit projects. During the session, participants had the opportunity to sit one-on-one with engineers to discuss issues in their communities as well as potential solutions using multi-benefit projects. Option two, Project Information Forms, gave participants specific information and examples of the Project Information Forms needed to be placed on an IRWM project list. Participants were able to work through a few examples and get tips on how to make sure their

forms were included and updated accordingly. Option three, Reviewing Funding Guidelines, was a look into funding guidelines. During this session, participants reviewed the draft Guidelines and Proposal Solicitation Packet for the Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant that was released for public review and comment.

Ratings: Session three had an overall rating of 4.4 out of 5, also with all sections receiving an average rating of 4 or higher. Section ratings ranged from 4.1 for the breakout session on exploring multi-benefit project opportunities to 4.6 for the site visit and the breakout session on prepping project descriptions/forms. The two remaining sections, funding programs and requirements and reviewing funding program guidelines each had an average rating of 4.3.

Highlights/strengths: Participant highlights stretched the gamut of the entire agenda with receiving hands-on help from engineers and the site visit receiving multiple votes for "best part of the day".

Comments and recommendations from participants: One participant commented that it would have been helpful to know in advance that they would be working with an engineer so they could have brainstormed project ideas. Another participant suggested including stormwater in this session and another asked for more condensed information.

Staff reflections and lessons learned:
- The short field trip was very valuable and a nice change of pace.
- The morning content from this session might be able to be condensed and incorporated into the breakout sessions.
- Consider showing successful project videos.
- Inform residents ahead of time about engineering resources and help participants prepare or strategize on how to leverage the opportunity.
- Maybe it would be possible to secure funding to actually advance the implementation of several projects for the participating communities?
- Think strategically about which engineers/firms to invite to participate in these types of sessions in the future. Could be an opportunity to build relationships with someone who a participant could or might actually work with in the future.
- Keep information about available funding and project development. Perhaps, SHE can secure more funding to actually advance the implementation of several projects for the participating communities.

Session Four

The fourth session of the Leadership Institute took place on June 29, 2019. During this session, participants received information to improve their participation in meeting and consensus building as well as started to create their story of self.

During the first workshop, How to Prepare for and Participate in Meetings, participants received information about how meetings are conducted, how to prepare for meetings, and how to provide

public comments during meetings. The workshop began with an overview of the Brown Act, with which all regional water management agencies and groups must comply. Participants were then given the opportunity to review an agenda and backup agenda documents for a mock Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Using the information from their earlier review, participants used the OREO (Opinion, Reasons, Evidence/Example/Explain, Opinion restated) method to develop a public comment on one of the agenda items during the meeting.

The next workshop, Consensus Building, was provided by the Consensus Building Institute. The workshop began with information on communication skills necessary to participate in consensus building. Then participants received information about the mutual gains approach to consensus building. Finally, participants were able to practice the skills from the workshop using a water management example.

The final workshop of the day, Building Your Narrative, provided a space for participants to start to build their story of self. To begin the workshop, two SHE staff shared their stories and provided guidance for participants to develop their own. After some individual thinking time, participants shared their stories in small groups and provided feedback.

Ratings: Session four had an overall rating of 4.5 out of 5. The agenda sections of how to prepare for and participate in meetings, the consensus building workshop and building your narrative received average ratings of 4.6, 4.4 and 4.6 respectively.

Highlights/strengths: Like session three, each section had votes for "best part of the day". Among the aspects of the material that participants noted as particular useful was OREO/how to prepare for meetings, sharing your narrative and working in small groups.

Comments and recommendations from participants: To improve session four participants recommended employing more variety of teaching and learning styles including more small group work rather than relying so much on classroom presentation/lecturing. Other participants wanted more time to be spent on preparing for meetings and consensus building. A Spanish-speaking participant requested a return to the previous interpreting protocol, noting that without thorough translation they were unable to learn effective. Finally, one participant recommended that small groups be created with a bit more intentionality to ensure a good mix/balance of people in each.

Staff reflections and lessons learned:
- Potentially allow more time for the consensus building workshop.
- The building your narrative component could be done during a different session.
- The preparing for meetings sessions seems like an obvious opportunity to incorporate more application into the curriculum. This could potentially be homework they need to prepare ahead of time or an assignment they report on the following session.
- Incorporate role play. Assign roles and create an actual meeting experience. This could include distributing an agenda, scenario and other related documents prior to session. Inform participants of what they will need to do at this meeting.

- Include video clips of real meetings to discuss and strategize about attendance and participation.

Session Five

The fifth session of the Leadership Institute took place on July 20, 2019. For the fifth session, participants took a water tour of the Kaweah subbasin and visited five stops to learn more about how water is used in the area, common issues and potential solutions, and how different stakeholders can work together to improve water management.

The first stop in the water tour was SBS Ag, a farm and dairy located outside of Tulare County. Participants learned from the owner about daily farm/dairy operations, how the farm has aimed toward more sustainable operations, and how the owner participates in regional water management.

The second stop was the Okieville Highland Acres Mutual Water Company well site. Participants learned from board members about the community's struggles during the most recent drought, how the community came together to solve the issue, and what other issues the board members foresee in the case of another drought or through changes in water management.

The third stop was the City of Farmersville Sports Park. Participants learned from the public works director and a city council member about the ongoing development of the park, how the park provides a small amount of groundwater recharge, and funding opportunities that the City pursued for the park project.

The fourth stop was the Oakes Recharge Basin located outside the City of Visalia. Participants learned about how the recharge basin works, the division of the Kaweah River into three separate creeks/ditches, and how the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District (KDWCD) works with the cities and other entities located within its boundaries.

The last stop was the Packwood Creek Structure that runs from the Oakes Recharge Basin through the City of Visalia to the Tulare Irrigation District region. Participants learned about further efforts by the KDWCD to recharge water and work with different entities to improve water management.

Ratings: Session five had an overall rating of 4.8 out of 5. Every stop on the tour had an average rating of over 4.75. The first stop at the farm/dairy had the highest rating (4.94).

Highlights/strengths: Participants reported liking all aspects of the tour with the dairy stop standing out as a highlight for quite a few.

Comments and recommendations from participants: Besides getting a better bus driver which many participants recommended, a few participants noted the heat and suggested starting earlier, finding ways to spend more time in the shade and/or providing the background information about the next stop

in the bus prior to arrival as various ways to make the experience more comfortable. A few also noted that it would help to ensure bathroom access/make sure there is a bathroom stop part way through. One participant noted that at times it was difficult to hear the speaker.

Staff reflections and lessons learned:
- Critically consider the issue of heat on the tour. Even an earlier start time did not help in the late morning/early afternoon. Maybe could/should be moved to an earlier Institute session.
- Secure stops and have itinerary ready as early as possible.
- Secure the bus ahead of time and vet company/bus driver.
- The tour started a little late but ended right on time.
- Secure and use a microphone and or portable translation equipment like those used by the Kings River Conservation District for their tours.
- Expand tour to capture importance of ecological watershed management and Tribal needs.
- Move the tour to an earlier session or have it be a pre-program event.
- Utilize the time on the bus to advance other Institute objectives for example to promote cohort/peer bonding or for group discussions on related topics etc.

Session Six

The sixth and final session of the Leadership Institute took place on August 24, 2019. Participants recapped and reflected on the previous sessions as well as received information about policy and legislative advocacy, sustaining community participation, and participating in water management at a wider level.

The first workshop featured a recap of the previous session and an opportunity for participants to reflect on what they learned, how they will use that information, and why it's important to participate in the Institute. From the information covered in the workshop and the reflection from participants, SHE staff developed a bilingual (English and Spanish) newsletter for community leaders to share with their boards and communities.

The second workshop, Policy and Legislative Advocacy, was presented by Adriana Renteria of the Community Water Center. Participants received information on the State's legislative cycle and how bills are introduced to the Senate and Assembly. They also participated in a role play activity on how to speak to elected representatives about an issue that was important to them.

The third workshop, Building and Sustaining Community Power and Partnerships, provided an opportunity to discuss building networks across a variety of fields. First, participants discussed how they would like to continue working together and possibilities for working with future Leadership Institute participants, and they decided that they wanted to continue to meet to discuss issues affecting DACs. Participants also received information about local networks and networks existing throughout Latin America. The workshop ended with tips and resources for recruiting new board members and residents to participate.

The fourth workshop, Diversifying California Water Management, addressed the participation gaps for DACs in regional and State water management and provided resources for getting involved. SHE staff provided opportunities at different levels for participants to get involved including county water commissions/committees, IRWM advisory committees, and State boards, commissions, and committees. Staff also provided insight on participating at the State level on the California Water Commission. The day ended with a graduation ceremony for the participants.

Ratings: Session six had an overall rating of 4.7 out of 5. The agenda sections on policy and legislative advocacy and building and sustaining community power and partnerships both had average ratings of 4.7. The Institute recap/communication tools and diversifying California water management sections had average ratings of 4.8.

Highlights/strengths: Much like other sessions, basically each section was a highlight for at least one participant. Example including learning about how they can stay plugged in and build their knowledge, what it takes to make a bill into law and what positions are available for appointments in water management and how to apply.

Comments and recommendations from participants: Very few recommendations for improvement were recorded in the evaluations. One participant recommended more breaks to help with the information overload. Another commented that the seating arrangement made it difficult for them to see the screen because their back was toward the front of the room.

Staff reflections and lessons learned:
- After preparing comments about each graduate ahead of time for the ceremony, share them among staff and consultants to crowd-source ideas and make sure everyone feels particularly special including those that are less familiar to SHE. Make sure everyone's comments are similar in length.
- It would have been better that those participants who only participated in one or two sessions didn't fill out the post-institute assessment since it is designed to judge knowledge/skills growth over the course of the whole program. This may affect the validity of the results from the pre- and post-Institute assessments (although probably not by a huge amount). Consider setting a threshold of attendance for those who should fill out the post-assessment (could correspond to the graduation definition?).
- Include more small group discussions or interactive components.
- Offer more tools for supporting community participation and leadership in regional water management after the Institute. Identify specific Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Advisory Committee, Water Board and Commission seats are available and develop tools to help them apply for and secure these seats.
- To facilitate a more productive conversation about what participants would like to do collaboratively with each other and/or SHE after completing the Institute it would be helpful to have a more structured/planned conversation that is guided by what SHE can offer/what the options are. It's nice to leave it open for participants to take ownership over however the conversation seemed somewhat hampered by the open-endedness of what might be possible.

- Formally incorporate individual goal setting for participants. This was partially done through the evaluation and post assessment but because this is anonymous that is not ideal.
- Allow for more celebration by shortening other components of the day.

SECTION IV – Assessing the Immediate Impact of the Institute: Pre- and Post-Participant Assessment Results

The Rural Community Water Managers Leadership Institute aimed to build participants capacity to engage, and be leaders, in regional water management (e.g. SGMA, IRWM, drought planning). To do this effectively, the Institute curriculum was intentionally designed to include three components: The why, what and how of participating in regional water management (see stakeholder perspectives and recommendations report). Thus, to assess the impact of the Institute, each of these objectives are considered here in turn.

Why: The Importance of Water Management and Planning

One goal of the Institute was to increase participants understanding of why regional water management is important for rural communities in the Valley including how regional water management has impacted rural drinking-water access in the past and how it could impact water access in the future. In the pre-Institute assessment participants were asked to rate their understanding of "how water management impacts and benefits rural communities". Across the participants who filled out the assessment, the average score assigned to this question was 2.7 with a low of 1 and a high of 5. By the end of the Institute, the average for completed post-assessment responses to this same question was 4.2 with a low of 3 and a high of 5. Using a one-way ANOVA difference-of-means test these two scores are statistically different from each other indicating a significant improvement in participant's understanding ($P<0.001$). In the post-assessment, participants were also asked a free-response question of whether "participating in the Institute has changed how you think about water and its impact on your community", and if so, how. Every individual that filled out this question responded yes, it had. Many commented that they had gained a broader perspective and deeper understanding of water in a way that will facilitate their participation in the future. One person noted they now understood "how our local problems tie into the larger picture." Another participant noted that one way their perspective has changed is realized that "we should not take water access for granted."

What: Developing Water Management Knowledge and Expertise

In addition to ensuring that participants came away from the Leadership Institute with a clear understanding of why regional water management matters to them and their community, the Institute needed to give graduates the content knowledge necessary to effectively engage in the process. The Institute sought to increase participants knowledge of a variety of fronts from state and regional water conditions and challenges, to specific regulatory and funding programs, to the portfolio of potential solutions for implementation. Based on the list of priority topics, twelve water expertise/knowledge

content questions were asked on both the pre- and post-assessments. On the pre-assessment, the average score for these twelve questions combined was 2.45. On the post-assessment the average was 3.73, an ANOVA test confirms that this difference is also statistically significant (P<0.001). Appendix B gives the average score for each of these questions individually. On the pre-assessment, the lowest scored question, with an average response of 1.94 was "understanding of funding opportunities". The highest scoring question on the pre-assessment was "sources and uses of water" with an average score of 3.17. On the post assessment, the highest scoring question was "sources and uses of water" with an average score of 4.36. The lowest scoring question was "California water law/rights" with an average score of 3.38. All questions gained at least one point on the scale from the pre- to the post-assessment.

How: Understanding and Navigating Planning Processes/Venues

Understanding the importance and the topic at hand, however, is not enough to foster effective community engagement in regional water management. The Institute also sought to help foster participant's skills to navigate and participate in these efforts. The pre- and post-assessments contained 15 questions to this effect. On the pre-assessment, the average score for these twelve questions combined was 2.86. On the post-assessment the average was 3.87, an ANOVA test confirms that this difference is also statistically significant (P<0.001). Appendix C provides the average score for each question individually. On the pre-assessment, the lowest scored question, with an average score of 2.06, was "apply for grant funding". The highest scored question was "participate on a water related board or committee" with an average score of 3.53. On the post-assessment the lowest scored question was "apply for grant funding" with an average score of 3.33. The highest scored question was tied between three: "Ask questions in water management meeting", "Participate on a water related board or committee" and "provide public comment and share ideas at meetings" with an average score of 4.42. All questions' scores increased from the pre- to post-assessment by at least 0.58 points.

SECTION V – Assessing the Potential Long-Term Impact of the Institute: Growing the Representation of Rural Communities in Water Management

Knowing that low-income rural communities are underrepresented in these efforts, the Institute hopes to empower residents to address this gap and leverage the opportunity of planning and management to achieve their community water management goals and ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water in their communities now and in the future. As such, an important goal for Institute, and implicit with the above considerations of increasing participants understanding of the why, what and how of participating in water management is that participants will implement this new knowledge and skills by actually participating in water management and the local, regional and state levels. While this is a challenging objective to assess just a few months out from graduation, there are proxy and anecdotal indicators we can look to evaluate success and develop recommendations for moving forward on this front.

With regards to local level participation and leadership: of the 13 Institute graduates, nine held formal leadership roles either in their local water board and/or with a local IRWM/GSA. To our knowledge,

these numbers did not change over the course of the institute although the some of the three without such a role did express interest in getting more involved in the future.

With regard to more regional level participation and leadership: On the Institute pre-assessment, participants were asked to self-report whether they "currently participate in water management and planning?" and "why or why not?". Later, on the post-assessment we asked this same question again. On the pre-assessment nine applicants responded that yes, they participate. Five responded that they don't. Another three did not answer this specific question. On the post-assessment, once again nine responded that yes, they participate and just three responded that they don't. Notably, based on the responses there appeared to be substantive confusion about whether local level leadership (e.g. board of directions of community water district) counted as participating in water management and planning so these results are unable to establish if there was an increase in individuals participating beyond the community level.

Perhaps more telling, therefore, are the participants responses to the post-assessment question "based on what you have learned during the institute, please identify two to three goals for yourself for the next 12-18 months". Along with goals related to learning more, building community participation and strengthening their local boards, three individuals indicated a specific interest in getting more involved. One participant wrote that they want to find out more about the local water boards in their area, and attend meetings of water boards, city and county. Another stated that they need to be going to board meeting and bringing more family and friends. The third participant wanted to get involved with the implementation of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund.

Since graduating, two participants have followed up with SHE staff about their interest in pursuing various leadership opportunities. One reported having applied for a State water related board and another reported looking into various county-level opportunities. Subsequently five additional graduates have reported that they have already or are planning to seek new leadership opportunities including on the regional water quality control board, the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund advisory committee. Following up with graduates about these efforts and their ongoing leadership roles/participation in the water sector will be important for documenting the long-term impact of the Institute related to this specific goal.

In October 2019, SHE staff attended a national conference with five Institute graduates to continue their learning about community engagement and involvement. From this conference, the graduates have the opportunity to apply for a non-competitive grant for a collaborative project. Currently graduates are working on this application to fund a community water tour or board members and residents to learn about other communities.

On the last day of the Institute, participants brainstormed ways they could work together to tackle shared challenges and goals as a group and established plans to meet as a group in the near future to continue conversations on this topic. In mid-November some graduates met together to begin working on their neighborhood works grant application and to brainstorm ways they could continue to work together. The outcome was that the group wants to meet quarterly to develop a position paper on DAC water issues. The future meetings of the Alumni Forum and any work that might come of them could also have significant implications for long-term impact of increasing rural community participation (and for the Institute objective of building relationships among communities). Importantly, several participants noted that they have and will continue to stay in touch with one another, indicating that the institute did have an impact on growing collaboration and connections between communities which also

may have broader impacts on rural community participation in regional water management and planning.

SECTION VI: Evaluation of program design and implementation

Overall, participants responded very positively to the design and implementation of the Institute. All of the Likert scale (1 to 5) questions posed in the evaluation received an average score from participants of over 4 (see Appendix D). More broadly, consistently on evaluations and in group discussion during the last session many participants continued to emphasize that the Institute had important positive effects on their knowledge and skill sets related to water and their appreciation for the opportunity to participate. When asked what parts of the curriculum could be changed or if there were things that should be added in the Institute evaluation, over and over again each respondent noted how happy they were with the curriculum. When asked if overall the leadership Institute met their goals, overwhelming the participants said yes. Two shared that the Institute could have continued to allow for more follow up and implementation on some of the key topics covered.

Comments/suggestions from participants:
- On various session evaluations participants recommended more varied pedogeological techniques such as small group discussions rather than relying so heavily on lecture/classroom presentation formats.
- While many participants appreciated receiving physical copies of the materials, others expressed concern about the amount of paper used over the course of the Institute.

Staff reflections and lessons learned:
- Focus equally on "soft" skills and power building.
- More fully incorporate land use planning into the curriculum.

SECTION VII: Reflections on Outreach, Recruitment and Accessibility

Outreach Process

For outreach, the Leadership Institute staff worked with SHE's Community Development Specialists (CDS) to help identify potential recruits, sent letters to each person that was identified by a Community Development Specialists or other partners, and created a press release to send to TV, radio, and newspaper media outlets about recruitment and also employed social media postings. Outreach began in early January 2019 with the letters sent throughout the month and ended in late February 2019 after the press release. In mid-February, staff started to look through potential participants' applications and selected about 10. Those selected were notified that they were selected and sent a schedule with dates and times for each of the trainings. In early March 2019, 25 participants were selected. The majority were from communities that SHE had existing relationships with although there were some that were selected from the media outreach. The promotional materials employed seemed to work really well in attacking interest and that interest came from across SHE's entire service area was very encouraging.

Outreach Challenges

Although a good number of media responded to the outreach, the ones that made it through the program were all from communities that SHE and their partners work with suggesting that personal relationships may play an important role in fostering and maintaining the needed long-term commitment. Given that many of those who were selected but never attended a session seemed confused or unsure about the specifics of the program and the high level of non-completion, it also seems as though not all applicants or selected participants had a full understanding of the program and the level of commitment it required. In the future it may be necessary to add a quick phone interview to the selection process to really explain what the Institute is and the level of commitment expected. Relatedly, it would also help with recruitment to have dates selected so that potential conflicts could be anticipated. The entire outreach process also could have benefited from developing a formal recruitment plan including goals, a timeline, talking points, requirements/commitments, selection criteria etc. as well as formal training for staff messengers.

SECTION X – Recommendations

The following recommendations stand out as broad themes and important next steps from this report. This list, however, is not an exhaustive list of recommendations and should be considered holistically with the rest of the report, including but not limited to the participants comments/suggestions/recommendations and staff/consultant reflections and lessons learned sub-sections throughout this report (many of which are not repeated here for brevity's sake).

1. Diversify pedagogical techniques and tools used across the sessions.
   a. Incorporate more group activities and small group discussions in various formats.
   b. Find ways to have the content build on itself session to session with an eye towards opportunities to implement new skills or develop deliverables rather than leaving next-steps or follow-up on each item entirely up to individual participant.
   c. Continue inviting guest speakers to provide diversity in presenters and presentation styles.
   d. Whenever possible, help participants learn by doing rather than listening.
   e. Create more formal opportunities for current and past graduates to lead discussions/trainings.
   f. Incorporate more visuals and live demonstrations in classroom style lectures.
   g. Plan and budget for extra time to develop and review materials as well as to conduct practice runs of sessions.
2. Work to clarify the commitments involved with participation in the institute during the outreach and recruitment stage and promote completion.
   a. Set dates for the sessions prior to starting recruitment and ask applicants to identify which, if any, dates they know they would not be able to attend. Include in recruitment materials a way for prospective participants to signal that the dates proposed don't work for them but they would like to be notified about future cohorts.

b. Incorporate a phone interview with applicants into the recruitment procedures to clarify the structure, objectives and commitments of participating in the Institute.

c. Secure funding for participant stipends and include discussion of the stipend and terms of graduation when discussing the commitments of participating with applicants and in the first session. Frame stipend in terms of recognizing (or matching) their investment in the program by attending consistently (i.e. this isn't free money! They are working for it. Hopefully this will help build buy in and also builds institutional recognition of their leadership).

d. Include a formal acknowledgement of the key commitments of participants in the application. This could take the form of a statement followed by their signature at the end of the application. Alternatively, there could be a description of the commitments on the applications with an associated question of how committed they feel and a self-assessment of the level of ability to comply with all of them (this would likely allow for more uncertain folks to apply compared to the former).

e. Prioritize early intervention to encourage participation by following up with participants who miss a session within a few days of the session. Provide debriefing and materials and discuss the agenda for the next session so they feel comfortable returning.

3. Formalize outreach and recruitment efforts.
   a. Develop a formal recruitment plan that explicitly lays out goals, timeline, talking points, commitments for participants etc.
   b. Develop selection criteria for choosing future Institute cohorts
   c. Begin the recruitment process earlier
   d. Develop messaging around the benefits of the Institute (including more material benefits like headshot, bios, engineering assistance, communication training etc.) and the importance of planning and benefits to use for outreach
   e. Set higher recruitment goals to proactive account for attrition. Given the importance for the first session for the whole program this may be preferable to having a waiting list with other individuals "on call" to fill in.

4. Continue efforts to address accessibility barriers.
   a. Securing funding for participant stipends and include this information in the outreach for the program. While there is a risk that this might attract a select few individuals for the wrong reason, it will also facilitate the application of folks who would otherwise not be able to participate.
   b. Consider providing a means for advancing part of the participant stipend to address up-front costs including transportation and childcare.
   c. Consider setting up carpools between similarly located participants to ease the driving burden.

5. Continue to find ways to strengthen and deepen connections between participants.
   a. Allow for more time in the first session for self-introductions and get-to-know-each other activities. Add shorter versions of such activities into the second and third sessions (at least) to grow and maintain connections between participants.
   b. Consider pairing participants up and facilitating ongoing check-ins between partners throughout the Institute. This could be modeled as "accountability partners" for each person to carry through work on a self-defined goal over the course of the six-months or could be related to some assignment around getting to know another community etc.
   c. Create opportunities for formal and informal mentoring between and among cohorts.
   d. Establish intra-cohort communication structures early on so participants can begin engaging each other from the start including a mechanism such as the google group by

which graduates can continue to share information, e.g. Bylaws, project applications, experiences other.

6. Refine and improve on tracking, evaluation and protocols.
    a. In each month's post-session participants were asked to list any lingering questions they had about the day's material. In 2019 nothing was done with these responses which is retrospect was a missed opportunity. In the future, these responses should be explicitly addressed. Alternatively, this question could be removed and replaced with a more targeted about improving the design/presentation of the day's material in future years. To address lingering questions, one option might be to answer or talk about them at the beginning of the next session. Another option might be to include answers to these questions in communications to participants between sessions (because they are anonymous this would need to be full group communications such as emails).
    b. When conducting post-institute assessment on the final day of the institute, make sure that only those graduating participants fill out the form. This will ensure the most accurate assessment of the impact of program as a whole.
    c. Consider including some specific questions at the beginning and/or end of the institute to gather information and feedback on how best to communicate with participants during the course of program.
    d. Train Institute staff on tracking metrics and mechanisms and their associated program objectives and ensure that they are implemented starting from the first session.
    e. Clarify the questions on the pre- and post-assessment where participants self-report current water related leadership positions and the nature and extent of their participation in water management so that it is possible to distinguish between local and regional level roles as well as between formal and informal participation. Alternatively, remove these questions and use the application/interview process to establish which exact positions participants hold and how they currently participate in water management and then use follow-up with alumni to continue to update this information. This later option will likely result in more accurate information than self-reporting.

7. Maintain communication with and interaction among the 2019 cohort.
    a. Building relationships between communities was one of the most successful elements of the 2019 Leadership Institute. To continue to this work it will be important to maintain regular communication with graduates and find ways for the cohort to connect amongst themselves.

8. Plan for post-graduation.
    a. Consider pre-planning post-Institute activities or collaborative work rather than waiting until the last session. Of course, this is a little challenging because it's ideal that these ideas be defined by the participants themselves however waiting until the last session and having loose/not formalized ideas about how collaboration will continue risks loosing the momentum built up over the course of the program.
    b. Proactively plan for how graduates will be able to get involved and assume leadership roles starting from recruitment by identifying which GSA, Advisory Committee, Water Boards, Commission seats are or might be available and/or targeting specific GSAs, IRWM groups etc. that have DAC participants that could participate or those that lack representatives.
    c. Develop more tools and resources specifically for supporting community leadership on boards and commissions.

9. Document the longer-term impacts of the Institute on graduates/regional water management and planning.
   a. Follow up with participants about their post- Institute needs and goals. Use this as an opportunity to support and track new and expanded involvement of graduates in water management and planning.
10. Continue to look for ways to differentiate the Institute from other, more Technical, Managerial, and Financial (TMF) oriented, water board trainings and to support both needs.
   a. Continue to develop and promote TMF trainings of various sorts.
   b. Consider formalizing the relationship between the Leadership Institute to other trainings available (e.g. through typologies or tiers) and work to articulate these distinctions and connections during recruitment and throughout the Institute. Ideally participants of all training types would know the menu of options available and how their current training fits in.
   c. Try recruiting participants directly from attendees of the other board trainings (creating a "pipeline").
   d. Hone methods to gently keep the conversation on topic during sessions. Work to help participants make connections between local TMF challenges and challenges for community participation in regional water management (e.g. resource constraints as barriers, time spent on local challenges can take away from time one is able to dedicate to longer term initiatives etc.).

SECTION XI – Conclusion

Appendix E summarizes the Leadership Institute's nine objectives and the extent to which each was accomplished during the 2019 Institute. Overall, the Leadership Institute certainly accomplished its goal, markedly increasing the knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation of many rural community residents to engage is essential water management and planning programs that impact their community's access to safe and affordable drinking water now and in the future. As with all new programs, however, there is still room to grow the impact of the program as future cohorts and recruited and trained. This report summarizes the opportunities and lessons learned to make sure that the Institute continues to maximize its impact and should be considered a living document to be added to and changed as the program grows and changes to best meet the needs of rural community residents.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Session stats at-a-glance

Session	Total attendance	No. of Participants	No. of Guests	Number of completed evaluations received	Average rating for all agenda sections (1 to 5, 1 being not helpful at all and 5 being extremely helpful)
One	15	14	1	12	4.22
Two	18	15	3	16	4.49
Three	16	10	6	10	4.43
Four	10	9	1	10	4.52
Five	19	10	9	18	4.84
Six	14	11	3	12	4.71

Appendix B: Pre- and post-assessment results for water content/knowledge questions

Question (rate your understanding of...)	Pre-assessment average score	Post-assessment average score	Difference
Regional water conditions and challenges	3.06	4.17	+1.11
Sources and uses of water	3.18	4.38	+1.2
Water management solutions/alternatives	2.59	3.79	+1.2
The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)	2.32	3.58	+1.26
Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM)	2.09	3.54	+1.45
Drought planning	2.44	3.46	+1.02
County and community planning/plans	2.18	3.58	+1.4
State, regional and local water management agencies/roles	2.41	3.67	+1.26
California water law/rights	2.24	3.38	+1.14
Funding opportunities	1.94	3.75	+1.81
The legislative process and water policy	2.24	3.58	+1.34
Understand water vocabulary and acronyms	2.67	3.83	+1.16

Appendix C: Pre- and post-assessment results for skills and abilities questions

Question (rate your ability to….)	Pre-assessment average score	Post-assessment average score	Difference
Access resources available to community water managers	2.41	3.92	+1.51
Articulate your own water management priorities/objectives	3.03	3.83	+0.8
Read and analyze water management related documents	2.78	3.96	+1.18
Participate on a water related board or committee	3.53	4.42	+0.89
Ask questions in water management meetings	3.22	4.42	+1.2
Provide public comment and share ideas at meetings	3.00	4.42	+1.42
Communicate important water information to others in your community	3.25	4.25	+1.00
Collaborate with other stakeholders and build consensus across different types of water users	3.00	3.58	+0.58
Advocate for a specific water management positions, interest or project	3.11	3.96	+0.85
Identify the relevant decision-makers for specific water topic	2.56	3.63	+1.07
Apply for grant funding	2.06	3.33	+1.27
Identify potential beneficial projects	2.75	3.67	+0.92
Promote and develop potential projects, for example getting a project on a project list	2.72	3.42	+0.7
Involve more of your community in water management	2.56	3.54	+0.98
Collaborate with other communities to advance shared goals	3.00	3.75	+0.75

Appendix D: Institute evaluation Likert scale questions

Question	Average evaluation score (1 to 5)
Instructors/presenters demonstrated good knowledge and expertise on the content	4.83
Instructors/presenters were invested in my learning and success	4.75
Trainings were engaging and involved the participants	4.75
Instructors answered questions thoroughly and thoughtfully	4.67
The skills I learned will help me accomplish my goals	4.50
Valuable resources were provided	4.58
The overall Institute curriculum was well designed/structured	4.33
The Institute helped me develop new relationships with other water stakeholders/decision-makers	4.33

Appendix E: Institute objectives and outcomes at-a-glance

1. *25 rural community water managers trained (Tacking mechanism: SHE's internal Institute tracking)*

Overall, the 2019 Institute trained 36 rural community water managers through attendance at one or more sessions. Only 12 participants, however, graduated from the program meaning they attended four or more sessions.

2. *Foster relationships among DACs and between DACs and other area water managers (Tracking mechanism: Institute evaluation)*

Of the 10 participants who answered the question on the Institute evaluation form, all of them agreed that the Institute helped them build relationships with other communities in their region. Multiple included in their responses that they hope or plan to work with other participants in the future and in the final session a large majority expressed interest in continuing to work together to collaborate and advance shared solutions.

3. *Increase participants knowledge about water resources including groundwater, local water conditions, water uses, water quality etc. (Tracking mechanism: Pre- and post-assessments)*

The pre- and post-assessments show a statistically significant increases (+1.28) among participants with regards to foundational knowledge about water and water management (the "what" of water management and planning) which outpaced skills-based learning. Notably, with an average score across all such questions on the post assessment of 3.73 there is still significant room for further increases to

participants content knowledge although the extent to which further increases are reasonable in a six session format are less clear.

4. *Increase participants knowledge about water management including state agencies and their roles, IRWM, SGMA etc. (Tracking mechanism: Pre and post participant assessments)*

See above.

5. *Increase participants skills and confidence to engage in water management, for example ability to provide comments, identify decision-makers, develop and articulate positions etc. (Tracking mechanism: Pre and post participant assessments, SHE's internal Institute tracking)*

The pre- and post-assessments also show a statistically significant increases (+1.01) among participants with regards to skills development for navigating and participating in water management (the "how" of water management and planning) albeit a slightly small increase than for content knowledge. Similarly, with an average score of 3.87 (out of a five-point Likert scale) there is potential room to improve upon these results.

6. *Increase participants understanding about the importance of water resources management and their ability to communicate their interests in water management to a variety of audiences. (Pre and post participant assessments)*

The pre- and post-assessments show a large and statistically significant increase in participants understanding of how water resources management impacts them and their communities (the "why" or water management) with a 1.5 point increase. With regards to their ability to communicate their water interests in water management, the assessments show a significant one point increase in participants self-reported ability to communicate important water information to their community and a significant 0.80 point increase in their ability to articulate their own water management priorities (P<0.01 for both). Note that the diverse audiences component of this objective was not clearly measured.

7. *More rural community residents are engaged in regional water management (Tracking mechanisms: SHE's internal Institute tracking, Pre and post participant assessments)*

Overall, it is probably fair to say that while participant's interest in participating in water management and planning increased, we have not yet seen an increase in actual participation. Following up with graduates over the next year (and even two) to see how their participation in water management and planning may grow or change will be necessary for measuring the impact of the Institute longer-term. Given the level of interest of various graduates in increasing their involvement there is reason to believe the Institute will have had a least a modest impact in this regard.

8. *Provide participants useful and accessible resources (Tracking mechanism: Institute evaluation)*

Participants were very pleased with the resources provided (4.58 average on 1-5 institute evaluation question). Besides knowledge as a resource that various respondents commented on, Institute evaluations reflect particular excitement about the community newsletter template and grant writing resources and participants requested more resources related to grant funding.

9. *Assist communities in identifying potential water management projects and adding those projects to project lists including preparing project descriptions and gathering other necessary information. (Tracking mechanisms: Institute evaluation, SHE's internal Institute tracking)*

Session three provided participants with an opportunity to learn about and brainstorm multi-benefit projects that could be developed in their communities and to understand the type of information needed to place a potential project on a project list. This session spurred at least two participants to begin work on projects in the hopes of getting them funded. One of these projects has already received a Technical Assistance grant to support project development and the graduate is working with SHE staff to continue to advance this work. Determining whether these projects are fully funded in the future will require follow up from SHE staff with alumni.

Appendix F: Important Documents for Ongoing Leadership Institute Assessment and Evaluation

The following document was developed as a basis for ongoing Institute assessment and evaluation starting in 2019 by consultant Kristin Dobbin: "Final tracking, assessment and evals – December 2019". The document contains the following documents which can be updated for future years based on the findings of this report and other unique future needs. The document contains the following: 1) A list of the Institute objectives and their respective tracking mechanisms; 2) the pre-Institute participant assessment; 3) the post-Institute participant assessment; 4) a template for post session monthly evaluations; 5) the Leadership Institute evaluation; and an outline of SHE's internal Institute tracking metrics and the necessary processes for implementing them.

There are two important things to note about this document. First, for many of the items listed above, underneath the document title there is an * followed by information about the purpose of the instrument and how it should be used. This information should be deleted for distribution to Institute participants and the documents should be formatted for ease of use. Second, as much as is possible and reasonable, SHE should keep these instruments consistent through time to allow for direct comparisons of findings between cohorts however necessary and helpful changes should be made as possible. Minor language and phrasing changes should not impede comparability. More significantly altered questions should not be directly compared across years without noting the changes made. If at any point you need a copy of this document of have questions about its contents, please contact Kristin Dobbin (kbdobbin@ucdavis.edu, kristindobbin@gmail.com, cell: 801-230-5537).

Appendix G: List of Raw Assessment and Evaluation Data for Reference

A list of the raw assessment and evaluation results generated during the 2019 Leadership Institute is supplied below. Consultant Kristin Dobbin will provide SHE with the raw assessment and evaluation results. These documents should be retained as some potential analyses across cohorts will require the raw data. Kristin will also retain these documents.

1. Session evaluations months 1-6 (Excel sheets - 6)
2. Summary of participant comments and recommendations for all six sessions (Word document - 1)
3. Pre-assessments (Excel sheet – 1)
4. Post-assessments (Excel sheet – 1)
5. Institute evaluations (Excel sheet – 1)
6. Compiled staff evaluations (Word document – 1)