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



connecting people saving rivers

● alliance



WATER UTILITIES

Water utilities provide opportunities to learn more about utility operations (e.g. provide tours of utility facilities and hold utility open houses)

+ Create a citizens' academy to educate community members on how the utility works

+ Include community members on utility boards and water utility staff on nonprofit boards

and advisory committees

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Community groups take time to learn about the water utility and its operations

+ Be empathetic to challenges facing utilities

Conduct outreach to utilities in ways that recognize they are juggling lots of competing interests



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR DEEPENING COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF UTILITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR HIGHLIGHTING SHARED GOALS TO LEVERAGE MUTUAL BENEFITS

WATER UTILITIES

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

+ Identify shared outcomes between utility and community group

+ Find ways the utility and community group can contribute to achieving those shared goals by identifying, leveraging and contributing respective expertise and experience

Look for funding, strategies, or other opportunities available because of this mutually beneficial relationship that might not be available otherwise

COMMUNITY GROUPS

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

WATER

+ Identify and promote existing opportunities for community members to inform utility decision making processes

> Establish communitybased advisory councils

+ Create mechanisms where they don't exist and be clear about their purpose, for example supporting or engaging in Community-Led Research

Be creative and inclusive in engagement approaches to allow for a variety of schedules and styles to facilitate engagement by underrepresented community members + Identify and support community members interested in serving on utility boards and committees



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

WATER UTILITY

Identify the ways in which the utility does—or could—provide broad value to the community and integrate that into operating documents

+ Evaluate how utility internal institutional structures can be updated to foster flexibility and increased community engagement and integrate that into job descriptions and competencies

Institutionalize communitycentered decision making processes

> Designate specific utility staff to serve as community liaisons with an eye toward making a good fit

COMMUNITY GROUPS

+ Work together

to identify how

community

voices, values and

information can

be integrated into

utility processes

- + Advocate and offer support for utilities movement in this direction
 - + Explore ways to amplify the benefits of community-oriented actions local utilities are taking



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR ADOPTING A COMMUNITY-FACING ORIENTATION

GROUPS



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CULTIVATING LONG-TERM COMMUNITY **RELATIONSHIPS** WITH INTENTION

UTILITIES

+ Create avenues to elevate community members as leaders on utility supported efforts intended to meet community needs

+ Attend COMMUNITY community and utility events to create opportunities for personal connection

+ Extend individual personal relationships to others within the community group or utility

+ Find ways for open, direct formal and informal communication and use those channels regularly

+ Listen to understand

+ Include water utilities in regular communications and attend their

meetings

+ Seek ways to compensate community groups for their work via collaborative funding applications or direct fee for service

+ Identify ways to formalize personal relationships to deepen and solidify the partnership

+ Build flexibility into formalized relationships to allow for evaluation, evolution and expansion

+ Keep formalities to a minimum to achieve desired outcomes while balancing administrative burdens

GROUPS

+ Establish clear metrics. data and lessons learned to share with utility partners to inform project work



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BUILDING **FROM PERSONAL TO MORE** FORMALIZED **RELATIONSHIPS**

To learn more, including full descriptions, best practices, and case studies, please visit www.rivernetwork.org.