



Smart Management for  
Small Water Systems

## Value of Communication / Message Mapping



UNC  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
FINANCE CENTER

This program is made possible under a cooperative agreement with EPA.



[www.efcnetwork.org](http://www.efcnetwork.org)



UNC  
ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER



# Energy Management Program - Basic Steps

- Step 1. Establish Organizational Commitment
- Step 2. Develop a Baseline of Energy Use
- Step 3. Evaluate the System and Collect Data
- Step 4. Identify Energy Efficiency Opportunities
- Step 5. Prioritize Opportunities for Implementation
- Step 6. Develop an Implementation Plan
- **Step 7. Provide for Progress Tracking and Reporting**

Source: NYSERDA



# Communication

“The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

- George Bernard Shaw



# Why communication is important

- Consistency
- Securing resources
- Clarify the benefits
- Maintain momentum



# Elements of Utility Communication

- Who are you communicating with?
- How are you communicating?
- What are you communicating?





# Standard components of an education and communication plan

- Identify the goals and objectives of each specific communication
- Review guiding principles
- Know thy audience
- Identify project impacts
- Develop messages/create communication products
- Evaluate the message



# Who is your audience?

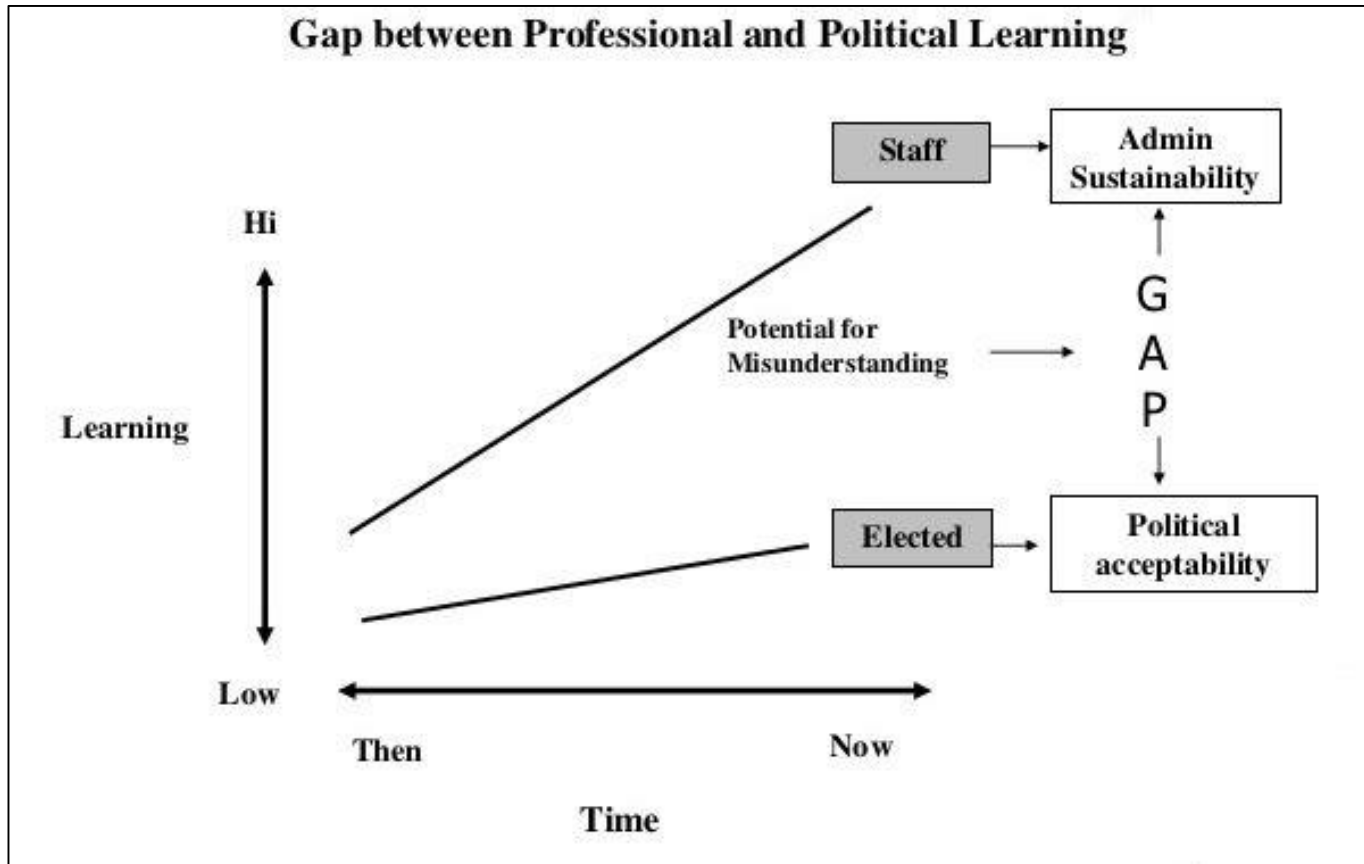
- Customers/ratepayers
- Special interest groups
- Policymakers
- Regulators
- Internal audiences
- Industry
- Funders



# Understanding your audience

1. What information or knowledge do they have?
2. What is important to them?
3. How do they get information?
4. What will the information mean to them? What is their reference?





Source: <http://pt.slideshare.net/PublicFinanceTV/bridging-the-gap-between-politics-administration-john-nalbandian/5?smtNoRedir=1>



## Audience Characteristics

Characteristics	Elected Officials	Administration
Responsibilities	Allocation of values/resources	Problem Solving
Roles	Representatives	Experts
Influencing Factors	"What do you hear?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Passion</li> <li>■ Dreams</li> <li>■ Stories</li> </ul>	"What do you know?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Data</li> <li>■ Plans</li> <li>■ Reports</li> </ul>
Connection	Intangible: Interests and symbols	Tangible: Information; money, people, equipment
Significance	Stories	Knowledge
Dynamics	Conflict, compromise, change	Predictability, cooperation, continuity

Source: John Nalbandian, [www.goodlocalgovernment.org](http://www.goodlocalgovernment.org)



# Principles of Authentic Communication

- Timely
- Relevant
- Truthful
- Fundamental
- Comprehensive
- Clear
- Accessible
- Responsive
- Compassionate
- Consistent

Source: Bishop, Bojinka. 2003. Water utility communication practices – What contributes to success? Journal AWWA 95:1. January 2003.



# Silent Service....no more



Only Tap Water **Delivers**<sup>®</sup>



American  
Water Works  
Association



**WATER'S WORTH IT.**



Water Environment  
Federation  
For water quality people

**Liquid Assets** The Story of Our  
Water Infrastructure





# Rate Approval Process Communication Strategy and Toolkit

- Water Research Foundation Project.
- While this is not about energy management per se, it is an example of studying the value of communication for water systems – esp. for water rates.



# Survey Objective

Identify the:

- Most important factors and information shared regarding the most recent rate increase request
- Most effective methods of communicating the need for the rate increase

Analysis Conducted by UNC Environmental Finance Center



# Methodology

	Chief Administrative Officers	Chief Elected Officials
Matched surveys sent	5,750 (4,439 cities; 1,311 counties)	5,750 (4,439 cities; 1,311 counties)
Surveys returned	2,110	781
...from local governments that manage and set rates for water utilities	1,408	329
Matched Sets from Same Local Government	202	



# Chief Appointed Official Survey Responses

## By population size

>250,000	43
25,000 – 249,999	450
25,000 – 2,499	717
<2,500	198

## By region

South Atlantic	295
East North-Central	263
Pacific Coast	219
West North- Central	185
West South-Central	154
Mountain	137
Mid-Atlantic	65
New England	61
East South-Central	29

Analysis Conducted by UNC Environmental Finance Center





# Chief Elected Official Survey Responses

By population size

>250,000	11
25,000 – 249,999	89
25,000 – 2,499	195
<2,500	51

By region

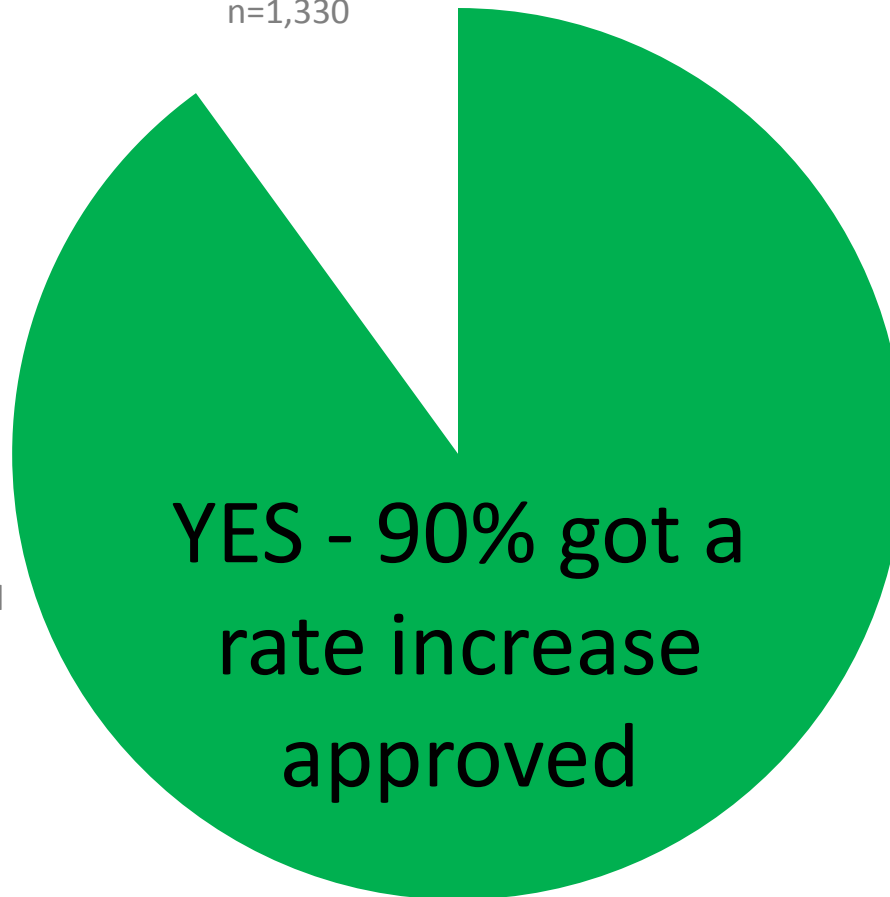
East North-Central	72
South Atlantic	66
West North- Central	54
West South-Central	45
Pacific Coast	37
Mountain	30
Mid-Atlantic	23
East South-Central	10
New England	8

Analysis Conducted by UNC Environmental Finance Center



# Are rates getting approved?

n=1,330



Analysis Conducted  
by UNC  
Environmental  
Finance Center



# Why are these factors important?



# Trust (Working Relationship)

According to administrative officers, the working relationship with the governing body is not related to:

- The size of the governing body
- Whether or not a rate adjustment was approved by the governing body



Analysis Conducted by UNC Environmental Finance Center



# Trust (Working Relationship)

But... the administrative officers with better working relationships with the governing board were:

- More likely to request higher rate increases
- More likely to request full-cost-recovery rate increases



# Trust (Working Relationship)

According to elected officials,  
**effective communication and  
more frequent communication**  
is directly related to  
a good working relationship.

Analysis Conducted by UNC Environmental Finance Center



# Conclusion

Water utilities are getting rate approvals, but effective and frequent communication about salient issues, along with public involvement, can make the difference in getting the rates utilities need to cover capital costs.

Analysis Conducted by UNC Environmental Finance Center



# Building a Message Map

Three key goals of a message map:

- To educate and inform the public (stakeholders)
- To build and maintain trust and credibility between the general public and decision-makers
- To create informed dialogue and decision-making among the public and figures of authority





# Benefits of a message map

- One voice
- Focused voice
- Cover all details
- Useful planning tool



# Start with your Central Point

- A “twitter-friendly” headline that ties back to objective
- Examples:
  - Contamination suspected/found in tap water. Take action before drinking or cooking.
  - Water system launches an energy management program to reduce costs and improve reliability.



# Three Tiers of Information

- Tier 1: Identifies the audience, as well as the questions or concerns that the message map is intended to address
- Tier 2: Three key messages pertaining to the situation
  - Serve as themes for a public presentation
- Tier 3: Supporting information underneath each key message



# Workshop Series Close-Out

- Next Steps
- Handouts
- Evaluations



# Next Steps

- Request technical assistance from EFC Network for energy or other capacity development challenges:
  - <http://efcnetwork.org>
- Attend EFCN webinars and workshops.
- Implement your energy management plan from A to Z! You can do it! 😊



# Selected Other Resources

- New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning: <https://www.nh.gov/oep/>
- NYSERDA Guide: <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/-/media/Files/EERP/Commercial/Sector/Municipalities/water-wastewater-energy-management.pdf>
- NAESCO: <http://www.naesco.org/>
- Process Energy: <http://www.processenergy.com/>
- VEIC: <https://www.veic.org/our-results/success-stories/reducing-cost-barriers-to-improve-public-buildings>
- PPESCO: <http://www.ppescohowto.org>; <http://commonsenergy.com/>



# Workshop Series Close-Out

- Next Steps
- Handouts
- Evaluations



# Thank You!

And please let us know if you have any questions.

David R. Tucker

Project Director

Environmental Finance Center

School of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill

[drtucker@sog.unc.edu](mailto:drtucker@sog.unc.edu)

(919) 966-4199

<http://efc.unc.edu>