

Ensuring a Good Policy Decision

Communication/Program Management Timeline

	Laying a Foundation Years 1 and 2	Building Relationships and Support Years 3 and 4	Designing and Communicating Years 5 and 6	Building and Communicating Years 7 and 8
Investing in Water Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin dialogue about future water needs and water reliability • Define key elements of a highly reliable water system • Define water supply problem and investment needs • List benefits and drawbacks of alternatives including WSR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend WSR and make a case for this recommendation • Continue to communicate the problem, need for investment, and alternatives • Listen to community and refine messages and approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to communicate the problem, need for investment, alternatives, and why WSR is the right answer • Continue to show the logic of the decision for a new water supply and adopting WSR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to communicate the problem, need for investment, alternatives, and why WSR is the right answer • Continue to show the logic of the decision for a new water supply and adopting WSR
Creating Water Quality Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare watershed water quality analyses and responses • Design water quality improvement programs • Conduct water quality outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with water quality improvements and outreach • Introduce preliminary WSR water quality plan into communications and outreach • Begin treatment, testing, and increase knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with WSR water quality communications • Continue with watershed activities and general water quality improvement programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with WSR water quality communications • Continue with watershed activities and general water quality improvement programs
Policy Decision and Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key audiences • Conduct community conflict assessment and set relationship development priorities • Define key relationships with regulators and alliances with other utilities • Design communication events that find interested parties and potential opponents • Gather initial community inputs and sentiments • Identify early adopter supporters of WSR • Begin contact database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain approval to recommend WSR to the community from policy makers • Gather written support for WSR with early majority and majority adopters • Continue events to find interested parties and potential opponents • Continue to develop relationships with key audiences and opponents • Send regular communications to contact database • Assess public support and un-resolved conflict prior to making detail design decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain approval to invest in new water supply from policy makers • Gain approval to proceed with WSR detail design from policy makers • Continue gathering written support for WSR • Continue events to find interested parties and potential opponents • Continue to develop relationships with key audiences and opponents • Send regular communications to contact database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain approval to proceed with WSR facility construction • Monitor and address public issues related to construction • Continue gathering written support for WSR • Continue events to find interested parties and potential opponents • Continue to develop relationships with key audiences and opponents • Send regular communications to contact database
Design and Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct water reliability planning and needs assessment • Conduct preliminary analysis of alternatives and make initial recommendation for WSR • Evaluate differences in rate impacts for alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define WSR water quality technical approach and technical program for creating water quality confidence • Complete preliminary design of the treatment process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop detailed design of the facility, treatment process, etc. • Prepare environmental impact report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction

WSR - Water Supply Replenishment

Sample Project Timeline

Years 1 and 2 - Laying a Foundation – During this initial project period, the utility begins by defining the water supply needs, and laying the foundation of trust necessary for Water Supply Replenishment (WSR) to get fair consideration. The typical utility will not have developed the water quality reputation necessary to overcome concerns that arise when proposing the use of recycled water to replenish the potable supply. A program of water quality leadership and improvement should be initiated with an aggressive approach to addressing watershed quality issues, and other issues that impact water quality. Negative water quality events that impact people, the watershed, or the rest of the environment should be avoided at all costs. General communications should focus on the need for new water supply, and the benefits and drawbacks of the alternatives for increasing supply. The “cost” of alternatives should be expressed in rate impacts (these impacts can be estimates). This is also the time for the utility to form key alliances and relationships with other pertinent water utilities or agencies (such as regional water providers) and key regulators. The utility also should be developing its list of desired supporters, and be assessing the community with respect to past conflicts. This result of this work is a list of individuals and groups who will be high priorities on the relationship development list. If possible, “Laying the Foundation” should extend beyond two years since it is probably the most important phase of the effort. Three to four years is better if the water situation will allow for it. To summarize, the utility focuses during this period on prioritizing and reaching key audiences, establishing the need for new supply, building a stronger water quality reputation, and identifying early adopter supporters of WSR.

Years 3 and 4 – Building Relationships and Support – Policy makers have now agreed to recommend WSR to the community. This does not mean that a final decision has been made. The utility should be building support and listening to feedback about its recommendation to invest in new water supply, and its recommendation to implement WSR. This is a period of gathering written support and developing relationships with potential opponents. Communication materials should include details about the plan to manage water quality risks and public concerns. These water quality plans do not need to include “final” treatment designs; however, meaningful information and plans related to treatment, testing, emerging contaminants, and event response should be included in communications. The goal is to demonstrate the utility’s water quality ethics and diligence. Communication events should be designed to find interested parties or opponents. The utility should be very aggressive in its relationship development efforts, and constantly be assessing the community’s support and the intensity of unresolved conflict. All of this work is preparing for the policy decision on whether to proceed with detailed design of the WSR facility.

Year 5 and 6 – Designing and Communicating – In this phase, decision makers have approved detailed design of WSR. It is important that the utility continues to communicate with the community, including continuing to make the case for WSR (including the problem statement and considered alternatives), continuing to gather and evaluate support, and continuing to find and develop relationships with opponents. The utility should also continue to build water quality confidence by continuing its efforts in water quality improvement and leadership.

Year 7 and 8 – Constructing and Communicating – Policy makers have now approved construction of the WSR facility and infrastructure. At this point, major capital is being invested so the financial risks are higher than ever. Because the impact of public perception problems is now greater, the sponsoring utility might be tempted to reduce the amount of communication and relationship development. The utility also may declare victory because it has received approval for construction. These are not good ideas. Communication efforts and relationship development efforts should continue throughout and beyond construction in order to protect the community’s investment. Projects have been cancelled after facilities have been completed, stranding valuable assets. During construction, the utility should pay special attention to the people impacted by construction efforts.