

# US Water Alliance 2021 Program Highlights



The following is a high-level view of the US Water Alliance's program priorities for 2021, each chosen in collaboration with our dynamic member network. The priorities will advance the US Water Alliance's *Three-Year Strategic Framework* and respond to urgent needs arising in the network due to the global pandemic and economic recession.

## One Water Council

The One Water Council is a member-only, cross-sector forum that offers a valuable opportunity for peer exchange and knowledge building. The Council provides a platform for members to talk candidly with leaders outside their usual sphere of influence and accelerate progress on today's most difficult issues. It is a forum for practitioners to learn from each other, ask peer-to-peer questions, tackle timely issues for the industry, partner on policy development, and provide input on the US Water Alliance's priorities. The Council offers peer-to-peer calls, virtual and in-person meetings, institutes, and other activities designed to support the implementation of One Water management by Alliance members.

### Key Deliverables

- Peer Exchange Forums and Ad Hoc Workgroups.** Our members-only One Water Council will continue to provide robust opportunities for peer advising on One Water strategies and innovations. Members will benefit from targeted committees to workshop One Water issues and monthly meetings to stay up to date on sector developments.
- One Water Leadership Institutes.** Leadership Institutes are premier members-only skills-building sessions offered regularly that focus on the essential capacities needed for effective One Water leadership.
- State of the One Water Field.** Leveraging the expertise of the Council, the US Water Alliance will assess and report on the state of the One Water field. This report will investigate the current health of the movement, areas of strength, and areas of opportunity.

## One Water Hub

The US Water Alliance is the epicenter for the One Water movement, providing the tools and resources that our members and allied partners need. Through the Alliance's suite of One Water Hub activities, stakeholders connect with great ideas and one another. The Hub helps innovation spread and take root in communities across the country. It also celebrates leading individuals and organizations driving breakthroughs in the water sector.

### Key Deliverables

- **US Water Prize.** Awarded annually, the US Water Prize is the premier recognition program that celebrates outstanding achievement in the advancement of sustainable, integrated, and inclusive solutions to our nation's water challenges.
- **One Water Webinars.** The Alliance hosts webinars on hot topics in One Water management that feature US Water Alliance members. Webinars are free and open to anyone to join. These webinars provide a forum for Alliance members to share their innovations with a national audience.
- **One Water Insight Interviews.** These interviews highlight the unique skills needed to advance One Water by spreading leadership insights from US Water Alliance members to the national One Water network.

## Value of Water Campaign

The Value of Water Campaign educates and inspires the nation about how water is essential, invaluable, and in need of investment. Spearheaded by top leaders in the water industry, it builds public and political will for investment in US water infrastructure. As a best-in-class public will-building platform, the Value of Water Campaign conducts research and public opinion polling, hosts events, generates dynamic earned, paid, and social media, and more.

### Key Deliverables

- **Sixth Annual Value of Water Index.** To keep a pulse on public opinion about water infrastructure, the Value of Water Campaign will conduct and release the sixth annual Value of Water Index, a bipartisan national poll, tied to Water Week 2021.
- **Workforce Communications Guidance.** The water sector faces significant challenges recruiting, retaining, and developing a prepared, representative workforce. We will use market research as the foundation to develop a toolkit to support utilities, engineering companies, and other water sector stakeholders to maximize their human resources and communications activities so they can recruit more women, people of color, and younger people into the water sector.
- **Research on Trust in Water Systems.** Improving public trust in water can be accomplished with a focus on improving water sector performance and local accountability practices and fostering a sense of place and community pride at the local level. We will test strategies and messages for how well water agencies foster a sense of place and community pride and generate examples of local accountability practices and how they improve trust.
- **Imagine A Day Without Water.** Scheduled for October 21, 2021, Imagine a Day Without Water raises awareness about the value of water and the need to invest in water and wastewater infrastructure by asking people to imagine a day without life's most essential resource.

## Recovering Stronger: Transforming Water Management Post COVID-19

Times of upheaval can lead to moments of radical change. We have a unique opportunity in how we respond and recover from COVID-19. For the next two years, the US Water Alliance is dedicating itself to efforts that address the structural problems that have led to suboptimal outcomes in water for decades: pricing water to reflect its true value, providing affordable and universal access, catalyzing utility partnerships and consolidation, deploying smart water operations at scale, and using water as a pathway to address the climate crisis. Together with partners and allied organizations, we must act with urgency and purpose to drive long-overdue changes that will allow the water sector—and the nation—to recover stronger.

### Key Deliverables

- **Five Pilots to Drive Local Innovation at Water Agencies.** The Alliance will develop five pilots with water agencies to address the five areas described above. For example, the pilot, Preventing Shutoffs for Low-Income Households, will support 10 utility-community partnerships on preventing water shutoffs for low-income households while balancing financial resilience.
- **State Policy Innovations: Listening Sessions.** States are a seedbed for water innovation and can play a central role in helping the water sector recover stronger. The Alliance will collaborate with regional partners to host listening sessions that explore emerging state policy approaches. The insights will be synthesized into a state policy agenda for recovering stronger to spread promising policies across states.
- **Recovering Stronger through Federal Policy.** To date, the water sector has been left out of federal recovery funding, and it is a missed opportunity. The Alliance will develop a federal policy agenda for recovering stronger in the water sector. We will collaborate with diverse partners to inform future stimulus and recovery funding and policies, host educational briefings, and elevate the voices of aligned coalitions.

## An Equitable Water Future

Water is essential to prosperity and progress. The sobering reality is that water challenges disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in the nation. At the same time, smart and equitable water management can foster opportunity for all people and communities. The US Water Alliance's An Equitable Water Future initiative works with water utilities, community organizations, philanthropy, and other stakeholders to develop and implement programs and policies that ensure all people benefit from water management decisions.

### Key Deliverables

- **Water Equity Network.** The Network offers training sessions, facilitation, resources, and peer exchange to help water utilities and other industry stakeholders develop and implement equitable water management practices. By helping cities accelerate their progress on issues like affordability, workforce development, climate resilience, water quality, and representative decision making, the Alliance aims to foster equitable water management in 75 cities by 2025.
- **Mayors Commission on Water Equity.** Mayors can play a considerable role in advancing water equity. In partnership with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, the Alliance will support a Mayors Commission on Water Equity charged with deepening how mayors understand water equity challenges and opportunities and recommending a policy agenda to ensure water equity for all.

## Change Leadership for One Water

As water stakeholders work to drive a One Water transformation, they often focus on the management of change—the structures, systems, policies that need to shift. Less focus is given to the leadership piece—how to address beliefs, mindsets, and develop the practices and behaviors that help people adapt to change. The US Water Alliance is addressing this gap by operationalizing the One Water Change Leadership framework developed in 2020 and supporting the growth of these essential leadership capacities across all professional levels of our dynamic member network.

### Key Deliverables

- **One Water Leadership Mentoring Connections Program.** The US Water Alliance’s Mentoring Connections Program connects rising professionals at US Water Alliance member organizations with one-on-one coaching from innovative leaders from utilities across the nation. The purpose is to foster relationships that help these professionals develop the six capacities essential to One Water leadership and problem-solving.
- **Racial Equity Training, Tools, and Resources.** With the growing call for racial justice, our members are requesting more in-depth training, support, and peer exchange from the US Water Alliance. The Alliance will partner with a racial justice organization to develop tailored racial equity training for water agencies and private companies in the Alliance member network. We will also create an audit tool, resource bank, and peer circles to equip members with the skills and capacities needed to foster racial equity in their own contexts.

## Fostering Climate Resilience through One Water Action

Scientists say we have less than eight years to act on climate before global greenhouse gas emissions warm the planet more than two degrees Celsius, with unprecedented, unpredictable, and *irreversible* impacts. The water sector is already at the forefront of experiencing these effects—more intense storms, persistent flooding, record drought, sea-level rise, water quality changes, saltwater intrusion, and more. The US Water Alliance is working with our member network and partners to align interests and coordinate climate strategies across utilities, the communities they serve, and citywide resilience efforts. By centering climate adaptation and mitigation on a One Water approach, communities will become stronger, more equitable, and resilient.

### Key Deliverables

- **“No-Regrets” Climate Resilience for Water Utilities.** The US Water Alliance will collaborate with our member network to use the best available science, incorporate climate data into resilience planning, and act even in the face of uncertainty. The initiative will then develop a framework for the essential “no-regret” actions utilities—regardless of size, governance, or region—can take to advance climate resilience.
- **Carbon Reduction Roundtables.** The US Water Alliance will spearhead an initiative with stakeholders from water, wastewater, energy, transportation, planning, land management professionals, sustainability offices, and other local government representatives to accelerate carbon mitigation efforts in the water sector. The initiative will identify where city climate-related targets align with resilience strategies at utilities. It will explore opportunities to further reduce the carbon footprint of water utilities through renewable energy, decreasing reliance on fossil fuels, and scaling up practices that support carbon sinks and storage. A compendium will then help utilities “level up” climate action while reducing operating costs, achieving multi-benefits, and increasing equitable resilience.

## Water, Arts, and Culture

The urgent and multifaceted nature of our water challenges calls for new ways of thinking, acting, and investing. Water leaders increasingly turn to artists and cultural leaders to help bring visibility to water issues, create more inclusive and imaginative planning processes, and leverage infrastructure investments to provide additional benefits to the communities they serve.

### Key Deliverables

- **Water, Arts, and Culture Accelerator.** The US Water Alliance is supporting five communities in forming a utility-arts partnership to address a water-related climate challenge. Participants in the Arts Accelerator will have opportunities to connect with their peers to learn from and inform each other's work. The work of individual cities and the Accelerator itself will be documented and disseminated so that the lessons learned can inform thinking and practice in other communities.
- **Artist-in-Residence at the US Water Alliance.** The inaugural Artist-in-Residence (AIR) program will integrate creative practices, artistic thinking, and cultural strategies into our programming and processes. The AIR will work with Alliance staff and members to infuse arts and cultural problem solving to advance One Water innovation and management.

For more information about the US Water Alliance's programs and activities, visit:  
[www.uswateralliance.org](http://www.uswateralliance.org)