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# Building Relationships between Utility Board Members and Staff

March 15, 2022

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Thank you to our funder!





# Acknowledgement

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The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document.

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# Certificate of Attendance



# Our Panel



**COYE GERALD**  
Moderator



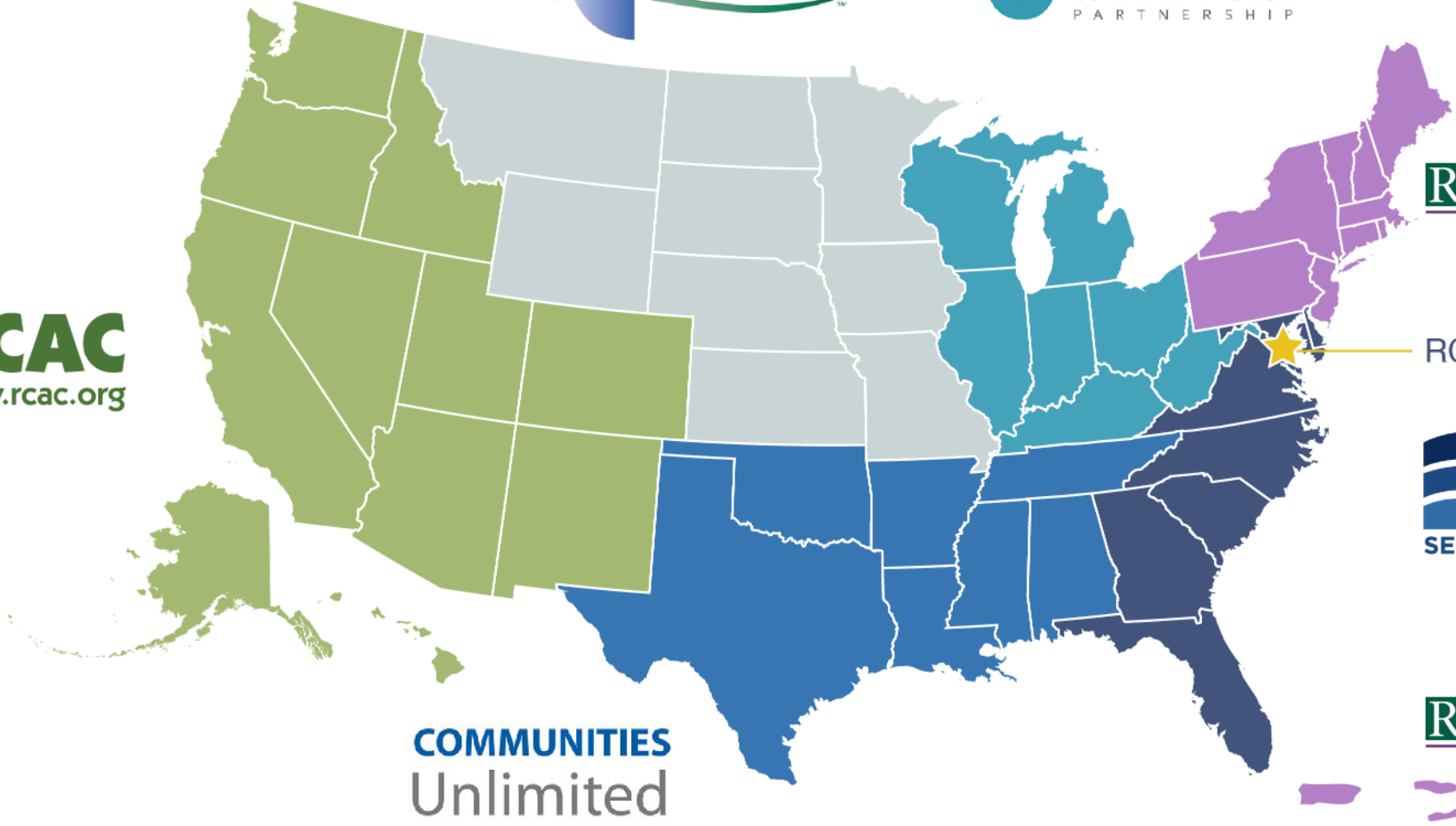
**GLENN BARNES**  
Presenter



**JOHN HAMNER**  
Presenter



# Rural Community Assistance Partnership



RCAP National Office



COMMUNITIES Unlimited

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Why should we care  
about the relationship  
between board and  
staff?

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# Your Presenter Today...



John Hamner  
Rural Development  
Specialist: Environmental

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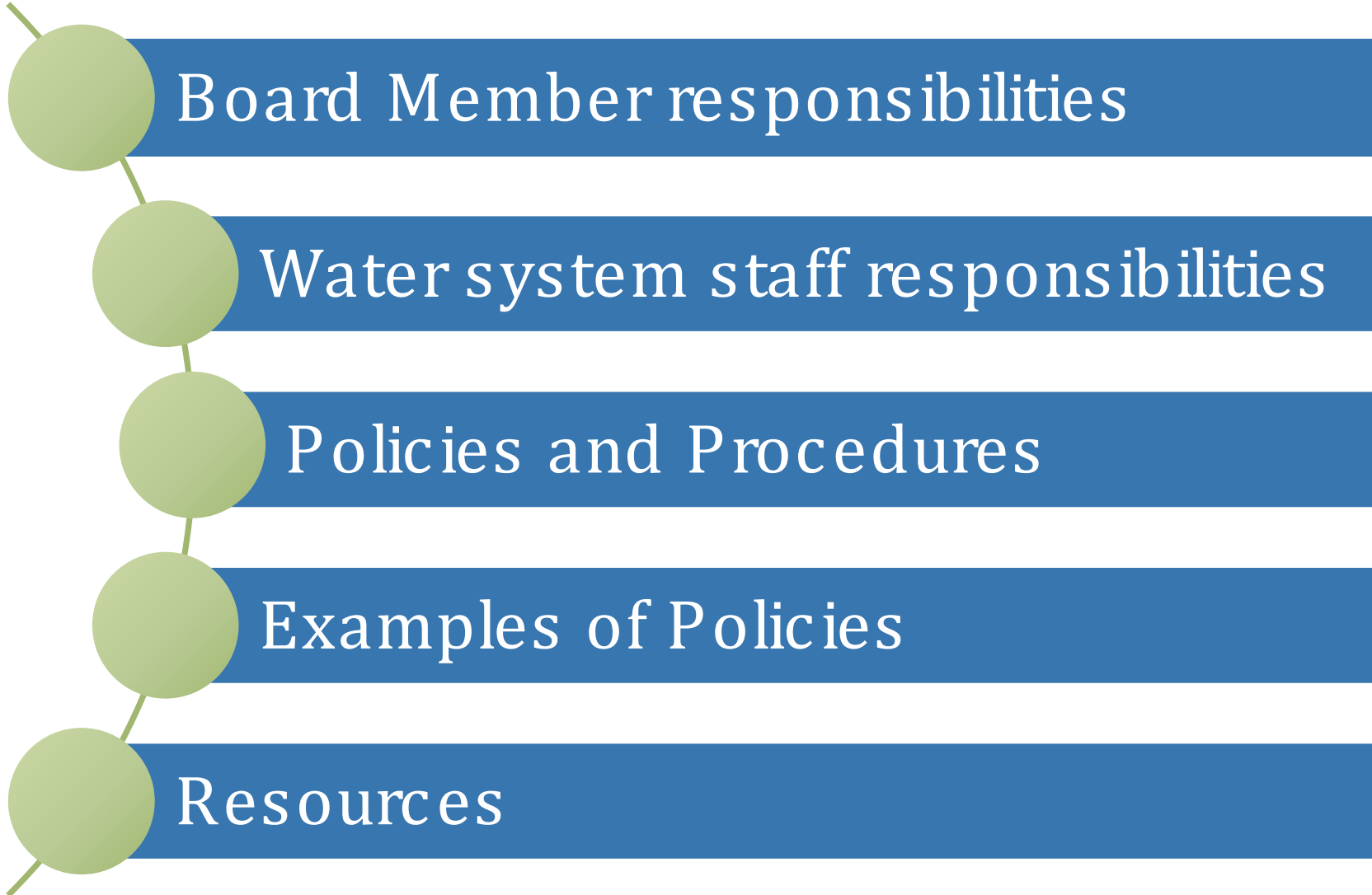
**“You can think that,  
but you can’t say  
that”**

**- Fred**

(someone less famous)

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# Today's Agenda

- 
- Board Member responsibilities
  - Water system staff responsibilities
  - Policies and Procedures
  - Examples of Policies
  - Resources

# Board Members, Who does what?

## The Board's job

- Meet regularly
- Set policies
- Amend policies when needed
- Ask for policy items to be placed on the agenda for discussion
- Encourage open dialog with staff

# Who does what?

What is not the Board's job?

- To call or stop by the office regularly to “check in”
- To direct staff outside of a board meeting without board direction/approval
- To represent the water/wastewater system in other matters (unless appointed)

# Staff, Who does what?

- The Staff's Job
  - Provide safe drinking water/wastewater disposal and all that this entails
  - Implement water system policy
  - Provide accurate data to the board of directors at regular/special board meetings (a monthly Managers Report and Financial Report for example)

# Who does what?

What is not the staff's job?

- Anything outside the purview of the water system policies

## Where do we begin?

- The key to a healthy relationship between a board of directors and water system personnel is communication
- The key to healthy communication is good policies and procedures

# Policies and Procedures

- Policies – Written rules that legally describe how the water system will be managed
- Procedures – Combination of common sense and “That’s the way we’ve always done it”
- Both should be revisited as needed



# Callayomi County Water District

## POLICY HANDBOOK

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

#### SERIES 1000 -- GENERAL

<u>POLICY #</u>	<u>POLICY TITLE</u>
1000	Purpose of Board Policies
1010	Adoption/Amendment of Policies
1020	Conflict of Interest
1030	Public Complaints
1040	Claims against the District
1050	Copying Public Documents

#### SERIES 4000 -- BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<u>POLICY #</u>	<u>POLICY TITLE</u>
4010	Code of Ethics
4015	Voluntary Candidate Expenditure Ceiling
4020	Attendance at Meetings
4025	Expenditure Reimbursement
4030	Remuneration

# Policies

- General policies
  - Adoption and amendment of policies
  - Conflict of interest
  - Public complaints
  - Public records

# General Policies Example

## Callayomi County Water District

### POLICY HANDBOOK

**POLICY TITLE:** Adoption/Amendment of Policies

**POLICY NUMBER:** 1010

**1010.1** Consideration by the Board of Directors to adopt a new policy or to amend an existing policy may be initiated by any Director or the General Manager. The proposed adoption or amendment shall be initiated by a Director or the General Manager submitting a written draft of the proposed new or amended policy to the Board Chairperson and the General Manager by way of the District office, and requesting that the item be included for consideration on the agenda of the next appropriate regular meeting of the Board of Directors.

**1010.2** Adoption of a new policy or amendment of an existing policy shall be accomplished at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors in accordance with the district's state statutes regarding the constitution of a majority vote.

# Policies

- Board meeting policies
  - When you will meet
  - Agenda posting
  - Conduct of board and public
  - Minutes
  - Rules of order

# Policies

- Board of Director Policies
  - Code of Ethics
  - Meeting attendance
  - Reimbursement (if applicable)
  - Selection of board president
  - The board's job

# Policy Example

## Callayomi County Water District

### POLICY HANDBOOK

**POLICY TITLE:** Code of Ethics

**POLICY NUMBER:** 4010

**4010.1** The Board of Directors of Callayomi County Water District is committed to providing excellence in legislative leadership that results in the provision of the highest quality services to its constituents and to comply with State laws including AB 1234 (Salinas) approved in 2006.

In order to assist in the governance of the behavior between and among members of the Board of Directors and District staff, the following rules shall be observed.

**4010.1.1** The dignity, style, values and opinions of each Director shall be respected.

**4010.1.2** Responsiveness and attentive listening in communication is encouraged.

# Policy Example

**4010.1.2** Responsiveness and attentive listening in communication is encouraged.

**4010.1.3** The needs of the District's constituents should be the priority of the Board of Directors. When a Director believes he/she may have a conflict of interest, the legal counsel shall be requested to make a determination if one exists or not.

**4010.1.4** The primary responsibility of the Board of Directors is the formulation and evaluation of policy. Routine matters concerning the operational aspects of the District are to be delegated to professional staff members of the District.

**4010.1.5** Directors should commit themselves to emphasizing the positive, avoiding double talk, hidden agendas, gossip, backbiting, and other negative forms of interaction.

**4010.1.6** Directors should commit themselves to focusing on issues and not personalities. The presentation of the opinions of others should be encouraged. Cliques and voting blocks based on personalities rather than issues should be avoided.

**4010.1.7** Differing viewpoints are healthy in the decision-making process. Individuals have the right to disagree with ideas and opinions, but without being disagreeable. Once the Board of Directors takes action, Directors should commit to supporting said action and not to create barriers to the implementation of said action.

# Policy Example

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# CSDA – Example of Policy Templates



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## CSDA Sample Policy Handbook



**Newly Updated: CSDA Sample Policy Handbook** Our collection of over 100 essential policies includes policies for board and board meetings, administration and financial management, and personnel. The newest edition of the CSDA Sample Policy Handbook is delivered on a USB drive in an editable format to allow you to customize your policies and make your own. Purchase includes a subscription to receive on a quarterly basis a digital copy of any new or updated policies through 2022. While sample policies have been vetted by CSDA Business Affiliates, we recommend your district seeks legal counsel to ensure compliance with applicable laws.

# Other resources

- RCAP guidebook for water and wastewater boards

## The Big Guide for Small Systems

A Resource for Board Members



## Within these policies...

- The Board's expectation from staff
  - Chain of command
  - Hours worked
  - Vacations/holidays
  - Drug testing
  - Cell phone usage on the job
  - Performance evaluations

# Callayomi County Water District

## POLICY HANDBOOK

**POLICY TITLE: Performance Evaluation - General Manager**

**POLICY NUMBER: 2175**

**2175.1** The General Manager of the District is retained and serves at the will of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall review the performance of the General Manager after the initial three months of service after appointment and then annually thereafter. This may be done using a process that provides for discussion and encourages feedback in the development of goals and the performance evaluation. The General Manager may choose to have the Board perform the evaluation and have the Board President discuss with the General Manager in private.

**2175.2** The performance evaluations should occur in closed session annually during the first Board of Directors meeting of the month in which the evaluation is due, or on another date mutually acceptable to the Board of Directors and the General Manager. The General Manager shall maintain a notification system that tracks the date when the evaluation is due to ensure the Board agenda is properly noticed and to provide adequate advance notice to the Board and the General Manager.

**2175.3** The Board of Directors will agree upon an evaluation form to be provided to the Board and

## Whether it's a Policy or a Procedure

- Staff should report to the Board at Board meetings
- This should be in the form of a written Managers Report and a written financial report provided to the board prior to meeting
- Communication is Key!

# What is in the Managers Report

- Anything water quality related (gallons pumped, met regulations etc.)
- Problems (leaks, customer complaints, potential legal issues)
- Updates on projects

# What is in the Financial Report

- Are we staying within budget
- Are we staying within budget (yes, I said it twice!)
- Bank statement or copies of cancelled checks

## So what's the point?

- If the staff is communicating with the board regularly it creates a better environment
- This communication eliminates the need for board members to “visit” the office/plant
- Are there exceptions? Oh yes!



## Are there exceptions?

- Individual board members can still meet with staff during committee meetings
- Also, if there is a personal problem with water service or billing
- General questions that cannot wait until the board meeting

## How would one start?

- Agenize review or develop policies
- Choose a victim to develop drafts
- Discuss in board meetings (time consuming)
- Approve or amend policies

# Resources



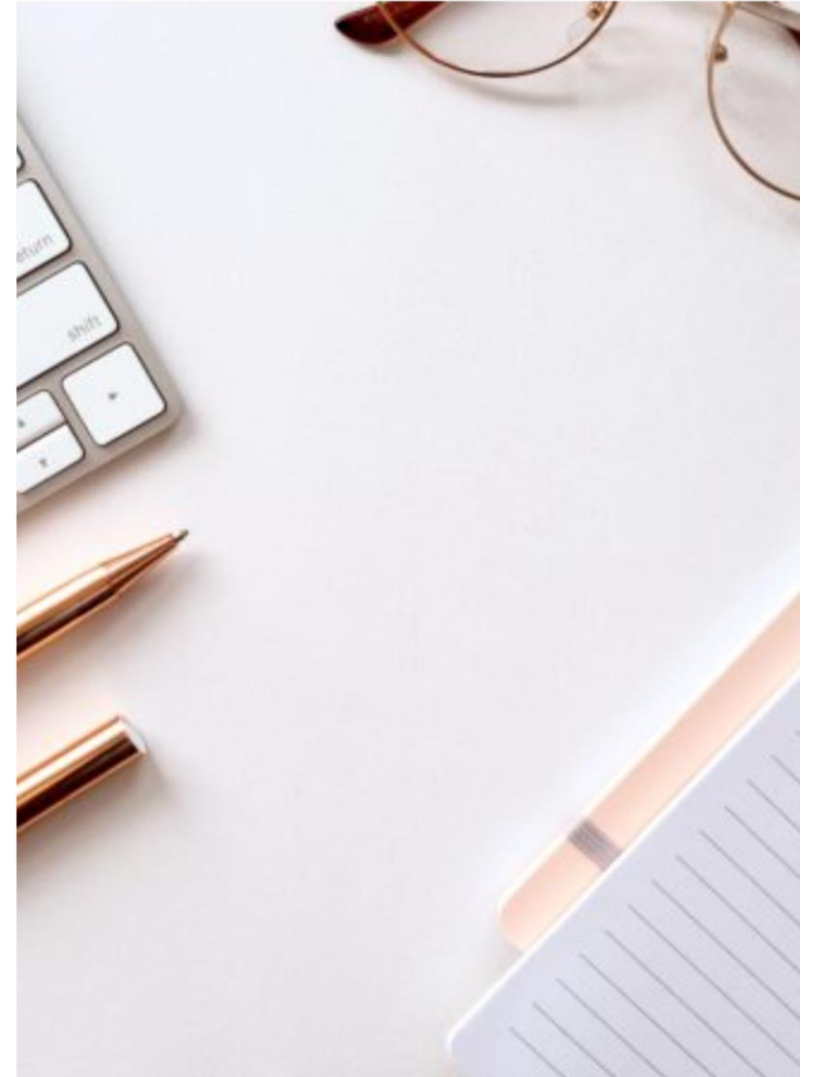
<https://www.rcap.org/managerialfinancialhub/>

# RCAP Managerial & Financial Hub

In order to protect public health and provide safe drinking water to communities, it is vital that water systems have strong managerial and financial capacity along with strong technical capacity.

Managerial capacity involves drinking water systems having the right people and the right organizational structure to

RCAP's Managerial and Financial Hub is a one-stop shop for small water systems. The hub contains information about RCAP's upcoming finance and management trainings. In addition, there are links to resources on finance and management topics from RCAP, EPA, and other leading organizations. And drinking water systems can



<https://www.rcap.org/managerial-financial/big-guide-small-systems/>



BOARD AND ELECTED OFFICIAL ROLES

# Big Guide for Small Systems

A comprehensive desk reference that is ideal as an orientation and background for new members on a utility's board of directors. Designed for members of the board of a drinking water and/or wastewater system in a small community.

The guide is divided into three major sections:

<https://efc.sog.unc.edu/resource/rate-approval-process-communication-strategy-and-toolkit/>

# Rate Approval Process Communication Strategy And Toolkit

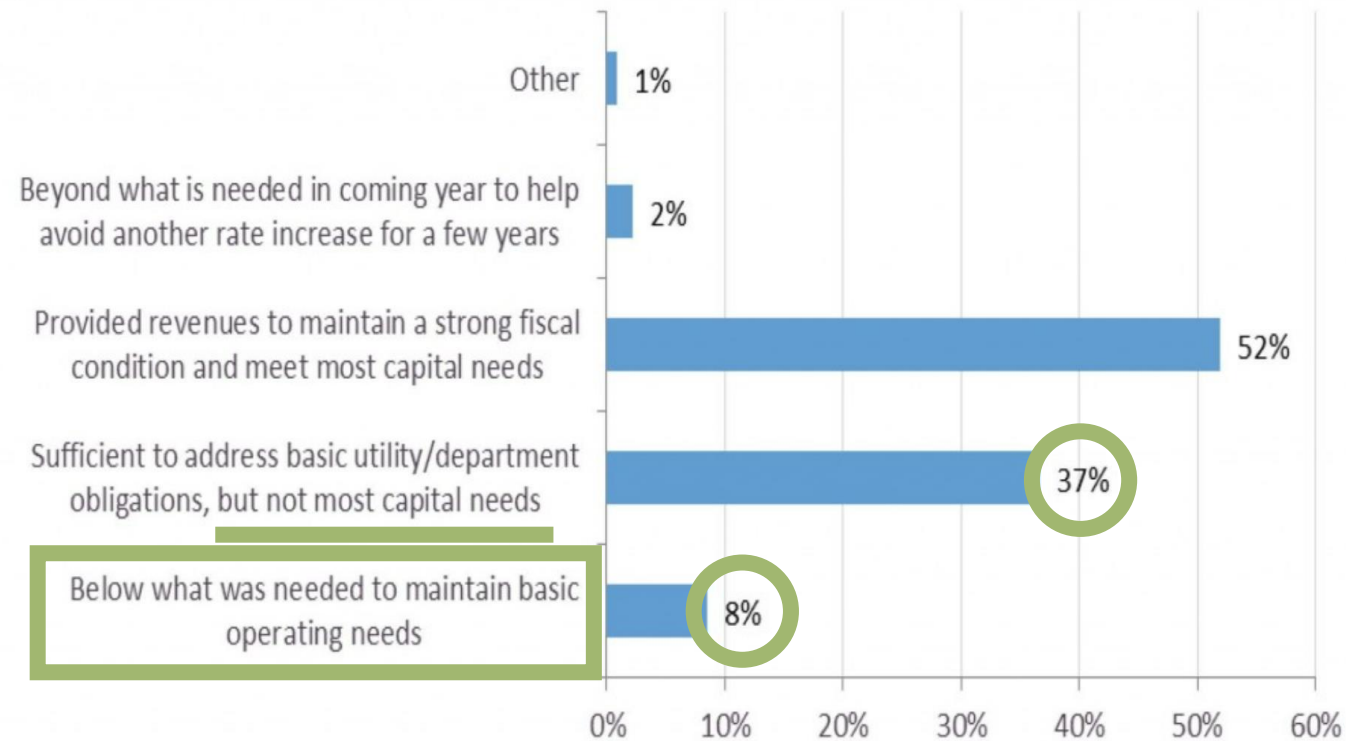
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June 1, 2016

This report and visualization tool are products of [Water Research Foundation Project #4455: Rate Approval Process Communication Strategy and Toolkit](#). The primary objective of this project was to identify and develop communication approaches, messages, and tools that water utilities can use to communicate water rate and pricing changes more effectively to governing board members, and gain support for needed utility rate adjustments. Addressing current and future utility challenges requires a diversity of messages, techniques, and methods to clearly define the problems the utility is facing in a way that resonates with governing board members. The result of the research is a **Rate Communications Toolkit** that contains several materials for utility managers to use to communicate

<https://efc.sog.unc.edu/communicating-rate-increase/>

In your professional opinion, which statement best describes the water rate increase that was proposed to the local government governing body for approval?



Are water utilities requesting the rates they need?



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