

2026 Virtual Workshop: Ensuring a Stable Revenue Future for Your Utility

May 19 – 20, 2026 | 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET | Virtual Event

Current as of May 11, 2026

Tuesday, May 19

1:00 – 1:25 **Welcoming & Opening Remarks**

The opening session will highlight the landscape that public clean water agencies are facing as the confluence of limits to customer affordability, rapid regulatory and technological change, federal funding uncertainty, and rising customer expectations create unprecedented management challenges and drive change in the public clean water utility sector.

Mickey Conway, NACWA President
Chief Executive Officer
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

Sharon Peters, President and Chief Executive Officer
EMA, Inc. | Saint Paul, MN

John Mastracchio, Executive Vice President
Raftelis | Niskayuna, NY

1:25 – 2:35 **Evaluating Debt and Mitigating Rate Impacts and Risk During Periods of Instability**

Hear from financial experts on the current debt financing landscape and market outlook and how utilities are best mitigating rate impacts and weighing choices between bonds and state and federal financing. Also hear an outlook on federal funding and finance and the state of negotiations in Congress.

The process of financial risk assessment can also help communities manage risk and prioritize needs—but pulling back the curtain can be fraught. Hear how utilities are leaning into the unknown and conducting financial risk assessments to shore up their organizational resilience.

Moderator

Kristina Surfus, Managing Director, Government Affairs
NACWA | Washington, DC

Panelists

Joe Crea, Vice President
Raftelis | Cincinnati, OH

David Cheatwood, Managing Director
First Tryon Advisors | Charlotte, NC

2:35 – 2:50 **Break**

2:50 – 3:40 **Alternatives to Traditional Rate Structures**

NACWA's Financial Survey of member utilities finds that around 70 percent of utility revenue is sourced from user charges alone, including combinations of connection fees, metering, etc. As revenue needs grow and utilities evaluate future needs, hear from two public agencies about their unique rate structures – one long-standing, one recently-created – and how they're impacting revenue stability.

Moderator

Nathan Gardner-Andrews, Chief Advocacy & Outreach Officer
NACWA | Washington, DC

Panelists

Justin Carl, Chief Executive Officer
AlexRenew | Alexandria, VA

John Murray, NACWA Board Member
Executive Director
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago | Chicago, IL

3:40 – 4:00 **Tenets of Operational Efficiency – Changing the Unchangeable**

Strengthening your utility's financial footing often involves embracing operational change and reallocating resources. Here, we'll provide an introduction to the various aspects of a utility cost profile (people, operations, and capital) that warrant evaluation and seed thoughts for tomorrow's discussion.

Feature Speaker

Sharon Peters, EMA, Inc.

4:00 **Day 1 Wrap-Up**

Kristina Surfus, NACWA

Wednesday, May 20

1:00 – 1:05 **Opening Remarks**

Nathan Qualls, Co-Chair, Utility & Resource Management Committee
Executive Director
NEW Water | Green Bay, WI

1:05 – 2:00 **Changing the Unchangeable – Case Studies**

Utilities know that strengthening their financial footing often involves embracing operational change and reallocating resources... but "how to" can be the barrier. The struggle to stop doing things is often harder than starting something new. Hear case studies from utilities that have successfully identified and worked through constraints to optimize performance, redeploy resources, and as a result find greater financial flexibility and alignment with strategic organizational priorities.

Moderator

Sharon Peters, EMA, Inc.

Panelist

Silvia Amparano, Deputy Director
Tucson Water | Tucson, AZ

Charles Bott, Chief Technology Officer
Hampton Roads Sanitation District | Virginia Beach, VA

2:00 – 2:30 **Moving Faster and Smarter 1: Position Evolution in the time of AI**

Like the communities they serve, utilities vary widely in terms of their integration of AI into their operations. Hear from utility leaders leveraging AI to engage their staff in new ways, and how they have evolved their position descriptions to meet the moment.

Josh Auxier, Project Manager/Engineer III
Greater Peoria Sanitary District | Peoria, IL

2:30 – 2:40 **Break**

2:40 – 3:10 **Moving Fast and Smarter 2: Getting Dollars Out the Door**

Capital investment program spending is reaching new heights at many utilities, leading to new challenges in getting dollars out the door. Labor shortages and cost escalations exacerbate the issue. Hear how utilities are finding successes getting dollars out the door to ensure projects stay on track and benefits are maximized.

Nick Dailey, Chief Engineer - Design
City of Dayton Department of Water | Dayton, OH

Brandon Vatter, Senior Manager
Raftelis | Kansas City, MO

3:10 – 3:55 **Narrowing the Affordability Gap**

Affordability may suddenly be a buzzword in national politics, but the water sector has been trying to address this pressing concern for decades. As the gap grows between increasing clean water rates and the ability of the poorest households to afford them, utilities are increasingly looking for a solution. This panel will discuss ways clean water agencies are tackling the problem, including through customer assistance programs (CAPs), partnerships with local community service organizations and streamlining ways for eligible customers to gain access to financial support programs.

Moderator

Kristina Surfus, NACWA

Panelists

Suzanne Coffey, NACWA Board Member
Chief Executive Officer
Great Lakes Water Authority | Detroit, MI

Christina Romero, Acting Assistant Director, Financial Services
Austin Water | Austin, TX

3:55 – 4:00 **Closing Remarks**

Adam Krantz, Chief Executive Officer
NACWA | Washington, DC