



Convening People and Perspectives: Affordability, equity and the path forward

Community water providers have long been concerned about issues of affordability and equity, but recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and public focus on societal inequity has prompted greater urgency to advance progress on these issues.

During the Spring Leaders Roundtable, we will host candid conversations on full cost accounting, knowing your customers, defining affordability needs at a local level and the various dimensions of equity. This journey will step through each of the Roundtable topics, building knowledge to take us to our next destination — the Fall Leaders Roundtable in November — where we will focus on steps toward financial sustainability and utility governance.

Join your peers from across Canada on Thursday, May 6 (starting at noon EDT) and again on Friday, May 7 (noon EDT) for a chance to hear from expert speakers, contribute to small group discussions and engage in a panel discussion. Please bring a mobile device to the meeting so that you are able to participate in polls during the sessions.

The preliminary agenda is attached below (page 2 and 3).

Details about the Spring 2021 Leaders Roundtable and Water Reuse “on tap” networking event are also available at: <https://cwn-rce.ca/municipal-consortium/leaders-roundtable/>

PRELIMINARY AGENDA – additional details to follow

Day 1 – Thursday, May 6, 2021

12:00 PM EDT	Enter REMO and get settled at a table (technical support will be available). This is also an excellent time to reconnect with other Consortium Leaders.
12:20 PM	Welcome and introduction – Sandra Cooke, Director, Municipal Consortium
12:40 PM	Stepping Stone #1 Capturing full utility costs: The first stepping stone to understanding the links between financial sustainability, affordability and equity Format: Presentation and facilitated table breakout discussions To achieve affordable, equitable and financially sustainable water systems, municipalities/utilities must begin with full cost accounting, including longer-term or future costs. During this session, we will discuss how utility costs can be captured more fully, as well as the challenges that Consortium Leaders are encountering in “balancing the books.”
2:00 PM	Break / Networking
2:20 PM	Stepping Stone #2 Know your customer: The bridge from capturing full utility costs to affordability Format: Keynote speaker and fishbowl discussion* Customer affordability is dependent on local community and economic conditions. Consequently, each community must define affordability based on its unique circumstances. Various data (e.g. population demographics, poverty indicators and local economic projections) can be compiled and analysed to inform the development of tailored affordability programs, customer outreach and communications, as well as future optimization efforts.
3:45 PM	Synthesis and wrap-up
4:00 PM	Adjourn Leaders Roundtable (Day 1)
4:30 PM	REMO platform closes

* For those who are new to the fishbowl format: This is a panel with an open chair. At any point during the discussion, Consortium Leaders can move into the empty chair to contribute or step down to make space for another person.

Day 2 – Friday, May 7, 2021

12:00 PM
EDT

Networking

12:20 PM **Overview of sessions from Day 1 (May 6)**

12:40 PM **Stepping Stone #3**

[Affordability: Understanding and defining affordability at the local level](#)

Format: Presentation and table breakout discussions

There is emerging recognition that municipal/utility affordability cannot be universally defined; it must be based on local factors and needs. Recognizing this, we will explore some of the elements that can define and inform community affordability. We will bring together insights from our earlier discussions and begin to shape a path for moving to more affordable service delivery.

2:00 PM **Break / Networking**

2:20 PM **Stepping Stone #4**

[Affordability, equity and the path forward](#)

Format: Moderated panel discussion

Exploring the affordability of water in Canada requires careful consideration of equity issues — such as income, race and ethnicity, age, language, neighbourhood and other social determinants of health. Viewing water through an equity lens can also span generations, given the lifespan of water infrastructure. Our final panel will include experts from across sectors, including other utilities, public health and other areas of the world to discuss water servicing that can bridge and connect our common goals.

3:45 PM **Synthesis, wrap-up and looking forward to the Fall Roundtable**

4:00 PM Adjourn Spring 2021 Leaders Roundtable

4:30 PM Platform closes