

Public Communication: Perceptions and Early Communications Tools

Public understanding leading to support for investment in aging water infrastructure is absolutely essential in order to close the “gap” between projected and current funding levels. In response to the need identified by its utility members, the Water Environment Research Foundation has funded a research program on Strategic Asset Management program (SAM) for wastewater and water utilities. One objective of the research program included the development of an effective communications package – aimed at public officials, policy makers, utility managers and rate payers – to encourage the adoption of SAM and provide guidance on its implementation in the utility environment.

This report provides the initial results of the research program to understand elected and appointed officials’ perspectives on the issue of asset management and infrastructure sustainability. It uses results of a survey, focus groups, interviews and a case study to understand how public support for infrastructure sustainability can be gained. Relevant and readily usable tools that focus on the infrastructure sustainability issue are identified. Messages that elected, appointed, and salaried public officials can use in communication with their stakeholders have been identified.

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