

PLAYBILL

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

WELCOME
TO THE

SHOW

presented by Rogue Water Lab



TAKE EIGHT
CATALYST 2025

September 22-24

Rogue Water Lab



Studio Partners

Thank you!

This production would not be possible without the generous support of our Studio Partners — organizations bold enough to back something unscripted, immersive, and unlike anything the water world has seen. Thank you for betting on creativity, connection, and the power of storytelling to move our sector forward.

Change Agent



Champion



Badger Meter

Visionary



olsson®



Collaborator



Advocate

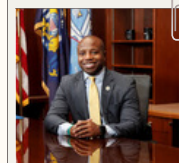


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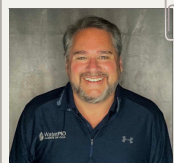
MEET THE CAST ON PAGE 16



Mayor Cavalier Johnson



Ameerah Palacios



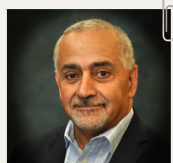
Mike McGill



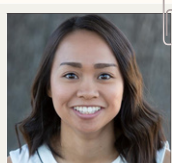
Britton Smith



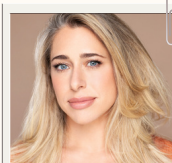
Christy Harowski



Ghassan Korban



Katrina Lumague



Sarah Pilla



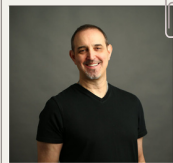
Stephanie Fu



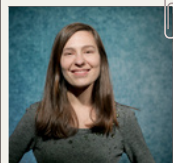
Sarah Bucci



Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart



Bernie Armada



Jordan Gass-Poore'



???

and Special Guests

PRESENTED BY ROGUE WATER LAB



Call Times

Staging Area

Hilton Garden Inn Downtown Milwaukee
611 N Broadway, Milwaukee, WI 53202

Getting to Set

Catalyst is a moving production. Each day, you're responsible for arriving on set on time. All sets are within walking distance from the Hilton Garden Inn Downtown Milwaukee.

We have Stagehands ready to lead cast walks twice daily from the hotel lobby near the breakfast area. Look for the crew with clipboards & earpieces! (If you prefer to walk on your own, drive, or ride share, feel free to meet us there and research your parking costs, if applicable.)

Monday, Sept. 22, 2025

4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Turner Hall — 0.4 miles / ~8 minutes walk

1040 Vel R. Phillips Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53203

Stagehand 1 departing lobby to lead group walk at 3:40 p.m.

Stagehand 2 departing lobby to lead group walk at 3:50 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2025

8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Discovery World — 0.8 miles / ~16 minutes walk

500 N Harbor Dr, Milwaukee, WI 53202

Stagehand 1 departing lobby to lead group walk at 8:00 a.m.

Stagehand 2 departing lobby to lead group walk at 8:10 a.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025

8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Milwaukee City Hall — 0.3 miles / ~6 minutes walk

200 E Wells St, Milwaukee, WI 53202

Stagehand 1 departing lobby to lead group walk at 7:45 a.m.

Stagehand 2 departing lobby to lead group walk at 7:55 a.m.

Production brought to you by:



Cast Logistics

Registration is open Monday from noon to 3:30 p.m. in the hotel lobby.

Opening Act is Required

This is not your typical optional “conference reception.” Night one is Act One of the Catalyst production — the opening scene that sets the storyline, builds your role, and launches us into the rest of the show.

If you show up late, you’ll miss key plot points and relationships that the rest of the production builds on ... and trust us, you’ll feel lost in Act Two.

Fuel Up Before Call Time

Breakfast is not provided on set. Complimentary breakfast is included for guests in the Catalyst room block in the Hilton lobby restaurant area. (Hours: 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.) It’s cozy, so avoid the last-minute rush. Please arrive to set fed (unless you do your best acting hangry!)

Costumes and Props

Dress business casual & comfortable. You’ll be moving, conversing, and rehearsing! Laptops are not needed and strongly discouraged. **Bring:**

- Play Bill
- Reporter’s Notebook (and a pen)
- Thoughts, imagination, & willingness to ask questions
- Openness to other perspectives and experiences

Food & Drink on Set

- ACT I** – Drinks & appetizers served
- ACT II** – Coffee provided in the morning. Lunch served
- ACT III** – Coffee provided in the morning.





Monday, September 22

12 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration (Hilton Garden Inn Lobby)
4 p.m. Production Starts (Turner Hall) & Cast Meet & Greet

ACT I – “The Performance”

Welcome to the set. Meet the cast.

Learn your role. Understand the stakes.

It's showtime!

Set Location: Turner Hall

Start Time: 4 p.m.

End Time: 6:30 p.m.

Drinks and apps will be served from 4 to 5 p.m.

In a world full of noise, spin, and shrinking trust, the water sector, journalists, and elected officials have to do more than deliver service. We are all storytellers, performers, directors, and stagehands in the unfolding drama of public perception. Catalyst 2025 isn't a conference. It's a production. From Act I to Curtain Call, you'll rehearse new ways of seeing your role, write new narratives, and step into the spotlight better equipped to lead.

Arrive at 4 p.m. ready to meet your fellow castmates and get a first look at “The Show.”



Tuesday, September 23

Set Location: Discovery World

Arrival Time: 8:30 a.m. (Coffee)

Start Time: 9 a.m. (1st Floor Theater)

End Time: 5 p.m. (Outside Pier)

ACT II – “The Plot Thickens”

Things get complicated. Misunderstandings, politics, and pressures arise.

Opening Monologue: “Cutting Through the Noise” 9:00AM

Stage: 1st Floor Theater

Narrator: Mike McGill,
President, WaterPIO

Key Themes: Media relations,
transparency, narrative
control, journalist/utility
dynamics

What do reporters need? What is misunderstood about journalism and utility service? How do we craft public narrative together?

Mike McGill has decades of experience navigating high-stakes media environments as a former media writer for CNN, public information officer at WSSC Water, and now communications firm founder. He’s been on the front lines of crisis communications from covering emerging contaminants to responding to water main breaks.

Mike will set the tone for the day with actionable strategies and authentic stories, unpacking what it means to communicate clearly, confidently, and credibly when stakes are high and noise is loud.



Scene 1 – “That’s Not a Story” 10:00AM

Story Selection in the Newsroom

Set Location: Doodle Studio
(2nd Floor)

Format: Interactive game show

Key Themes: news judgement, what makes a story, press releases, how journalists think

Narrators: Reporters Jordan Gass-Pooré and Sarah Pilla

Ever wonder why the media passed on your press release? Or why that one utility’s story went viral? In this session, we’ll explore the 8 pillars of news judgment with a twist. Join journalists for a rapid fire “That’s Not a Story” game where teams pitch water-related headlines, and the journalists say yes or no, and why. This scene will challenge cast members to think like a reporter and sharpen their storytelling instincts.



Scene 2 – “Off Script” 11:00AM

Fighting Misinformation in a Distrustful World

Set Location: Milwaukee Muscle
(1st Floor)

Format: Choose your own
adventure challenge

Narrator: Water Hub’s
Sarah Bucci

Misinformation. Disinformation. Low trust in institutions. High noise from social media. How do you communicate when people are primed not to believe you? With examples like the 2025 California wildfires, this scene will explore real-world water comms crises and misinformation moments, and how to respond. The scene ends with a media audit overview from The Water Hub.

Intermission – “Two Narratives” 12:00PM

A Postmortem on New Orleans

Set Location: Pilot House
(3th Floor)

Format: Conversation over lunch
Digesting food and new
perspectives

Narrators: Christy Harowski
(HCB Strategies), Ghassan
Korban (Veolia),
and a reporter

In a raw, real conversation, former New Orleans utility leader Ghassan Korban and a reporter sit down to share what is going on behind the scenes on both sides when big stories make the headlines. We talk vulnerability, transparency, and what could be gained from better relationships between leaders and press.



Scene 3 – “Reel Talk” 1:30PM

Your Socials Need A Gen Z Glow Up

Set Location: Theater/ Great
Lakes Exhibit (1st Floor)

Format: Trend demo + group
video challenge

Key Themes: Social media,
authentic engagement

Narrators: Stephanie Lu &
Katrina Lumague
(Walnut Valley Water District)

Social media gave us the power to speak directly to the public. We are our own reporters now. If your content sounds like it came from a press release, no one's listening. Learn how to create content that's less robotic and more real. Step into trend formats, editing tips, and the do's and don'ts of engaging online, then work in teams to create your own Catalyst-themed reel using CapCut. Let's make water content worth watching!



Scene 4 – "Under Pressure" 2:30PM

Messaging When You're Already Under Water

Set Location: Aquarium
(Basement Level)

Format: Strategy session +
scenario & media
dynamics breakdown

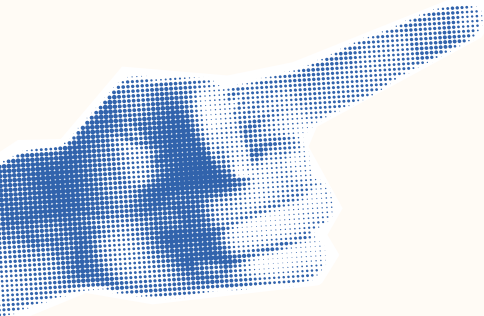
Key Themes: Trust collapse, media
pressure, political conflict, radical
transparency, real-time crisis
response, press dynamics

Narrator: Ameerah Palacios

Head below the surface – literally and figuratively – to the aquarium, descending into murky depths where press, politics, and public pressure collide. This scene explores what happens when you're in the eye of the storm, navigating media firestorms, political blowback, and public suspicion all at once.

Whether it's accusations of corruption, community groups distributing bottled water with conflicting messaging, or the mayor contradicting your talking points, this is where trust is either lost or rebuilt.

How do you lead communication when trust has already eroded, the press is circling, and public narratives are spiraling?



Final Rehearsal: "Pier Review" 4:00PM

The Human Work Beneath the Headlines

Set Location: Pier (Outside)

Format: Collective reflection with music, story, and choice-based expression

Key Themes: Trust, vulnerability, emotional intelligence, the humanity behind communication

Narrator: Britton Smith (Britton & The Sting)

As Act II ends, we leave tactics behind and turn inward. Out on the pier, overlooking Lake Michigan, we gather not to perform, but to reflect, release, and reconnect.

With guided prompts, storytelling, and optional creative expression, this **off-the-record** rehearsal cracks open what it really means to build trust, to be misunderstood, and to keep showing up.

Led by NYC-based artist Britton Smith and his guitarist, this is Catalyst's soul moment. You'll step out of your professional persona, let art lead you into your own truth, and maybe even lend your voice to the beat of something shared. You don't have to speak. You don't have to sing. But you do have to feel.

This is why you're here.

Dismissal: 5:30 PM





Wednesday, September 24

Set Location: City Hall, Council Chambers

Arrival Time: 8:00 a.m. (coffee)

Start Time: 8:15 a.m. (a word from our Studio Partners)

End Time: 12:30 p.m.

ACT III — “The Climax and Curtain Call”

The story arcs converge. Power shifts. Step out of character and take control as the cast becomes the creators.

Scene 1 – “Center Stage” 8:30AM

Mayor Cavalier ‘Chevy’ Johnson on the Mic



Key Themes: Decision-making pressure, media and policy tensions, public accountability

Narrators: Mayor Cavalier “Chevy” Johnson

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson has been driven by public service since the age of 14. As the city’s first African American elected mayor, Mayor Johnson balances urgent public needs — like water, safety, and equity — with political and media pressures. Join us in the council chamber at City Hall for an honest conversation on water investment, where the buck stops, and what don’t we ask mayors, but should. No question off-limits, no spin allowed, as the Mayor is center stage talking pressure, power & politics.



Scene 2 – "Yes, And..." 9:30AM

You're Not Making Any Sense!

Format: Interactive improv workshop with guided communication exercises

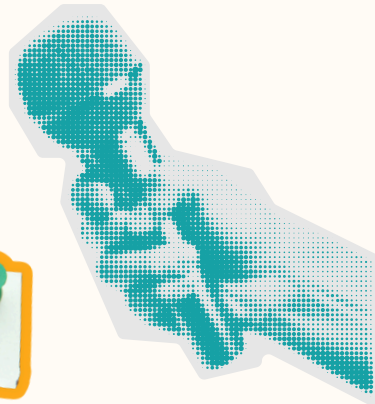
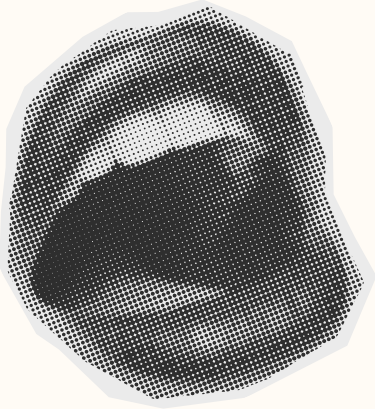
Key Themes: Listening, empathy, storytelling, body language, plain language

Narrator: Dr. Bernie J. Armada, Professor of Communication Studies, University of St. Thomas

Lights up on an official zoning out, a utility leader droning on, and a journalist furiously writing quotes no one will understand out of context.

Enter: Dr. Bernie Armada — part professor, part performer — ready to rescue our public communications from the clutches of jargon, monotone delivery, and robotic eye contact.

In this improv-infused experience, tap into one of the most overlooked elements of trust building: how you show up. Learn to engage with your audience (whether it's a city council, community meeting, or newsroom) with warmth, authenticity, and clarity. Practice tools from the actor's stage (active listening, emotive storytelling, body language) to make sure your message lands and connects.



Scene 3 – "Flip the Script" 11:00AM

The Spotlight's On You

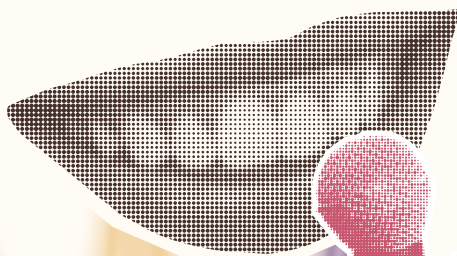
Format: Panel with a twist

Key Themes: Government affairs, intergovernmental dynamics, mutual understanding, public trust, advocacy strategy

Narrators: elected officials

Navigating government relations isn't one-size-fits-all. City councils think differently than state legislators. Mayors have different pressures than county judges. In this scene, we explore how we can tailor our advocacy efforts and build more effective partnerships across levels of government.

This isn't your typical scene. We've brought together elected officials who know the inside game, but what happens next? Well, let's just say the script doesn't go the way you'd expect. Come ready to think differently, speak honestly, and hear how you're perceived from the other side of the dais.



"That's a Wrap" 12:00PM and the Catalyst Oath

Key Themes: Reflection & renewal, narrative authorship, trust-building, creative leadership

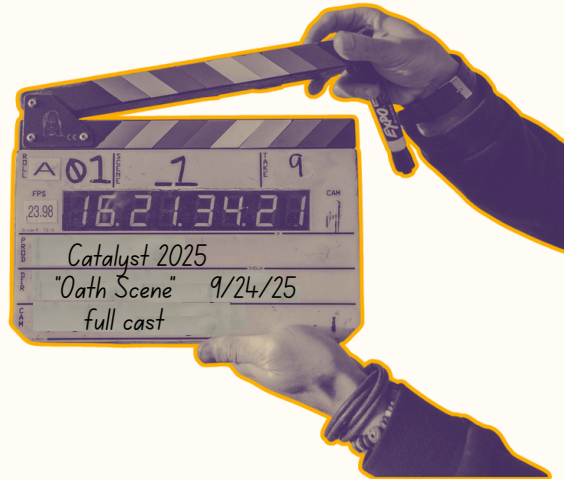
Narrator: Director Greg Wukasch

It's time for our final bow. In the same chamber where we flipped narratives and explored the depths of trust under pressure, we gather for the Catalyst Oath – our final call to action. This isn't just a moment of closure; it's a doorway. We step off this stage not as cast, but as directors of our own stories back home.

After a motivational closing by Greg Wukasch, we'll take our oath, reflecting on the bronze sculpture "Mixed Feelings" outside City Hall. The layered, spiraling design reminds us that progress isn't linear and human narratives are complex, textured, and ever-moving.

This is your moment to reflect:

Who were you here? How will you bring clarity to the noise, humanity where there is misunderstanding, and direct a new story?



Last Up →

Curtain Call: 12:30 PM

**Film your Catalyst testimonial with
waterloop and take a final bow.**





Meet the Cast

Full Production Members



Chelsea Boozer

Full Production

Chelsea Boozer is Executive Director of Rogue Water Lab, a nonprofit helping the water sector strengthen public trust through authentic engagement and strategic communication. With a background in journalism and utility government affairs, she brings curiosity and collaboration to connecting people with water. She also serves on the American Water Works Association's Executive Committee and Board of Directors and holds an MPA from Syracuse University.

Greg Wukasch is External Affairs Manager at San Antonio Water System, where he has worked since 1998 after starting as an Education Coordinator. Known as a storyteller, he creates ways to connect citizens with water and the city he loves. Greg has also worked as an environmental educator at Aquarena Center, a corporate training coordinator for Six Flags, and an adjunct professor at St. Phillips College.



Greg Wukasch

Full Production



Britton Smith

Act I & Act II
Rehearsal

Britton Smith is a Tony Award-winning artist, advocate, and frontman of funk liberation band Britton & The Sting, featured in outlets such as Vanity Fair, Vogue, and The New Yorker. He created MAMA, a theatrical concert about water that premiered at Little Island in 2024 and is touring nationally in 2025. On Broadway, he has appeared in Be More Chill, Shuffle Along, and After Midnight, and he co-founded the Tony Award-winning Broadway Advocacy Coalition.

Meet the Cast

ACT I



Mike McGill

Opening Monologue

Mike McGill is President of WaterPIO, a communications firm helping water utilities and industry organizations in more than 20 states. He also founded LeadCopperRule.com and PFASComms.com to guide utilities through regulatory and communications challenges. Before WaterPIO, Mike led communications at WSSC Water, Loudoun Water, and Cape Fear Public Utility Authority. A graduate of Syracuse University, he began his career as a producer and writer for CNN, National Journal, and WUSA-TV.

Jordan Gass-Pooré is an award-winning independent podcast creator and investigative journalist with more than a decade of experience. She created the Hazard podcast series, including Hazard NJ with NJ PBS and Hazard NYC with THE CITY, exploring pollution and climate change impacts on communities.



Jordan Gass-Pooré

ACT II: Scene 1



Sarah Pilla

ACT II: Scene 1

Sarah Pilla is an Emmy Award-winning climate and environment journalist for Spectrum News 1, where she reports on extreme weather, sustainability, and climate solutions. She has produced and hosted multiple climate specials, including Innovations for a Sustainable Climate and The Trickle Down Effect. Sarah has covered stories ranging from the Colorado River crisis to regenerative agriculture and serves as a regular anchor and emcee for major climate events.



Meet the Cast

ACT II

Sarah Bucci is a communications strategist with 15 years of experience advancing conservation, climate, and clean water solutions. As Director of Strategic Communications at the Water Hub, she leads narrative research, media outreach, and creative campaigns to make water communications more accessible and effective.



Sarah Bucci

ACT II: Scene 2



Christy Harowski

Intermission

Christy Harowski is founder and CEO of HCB Strategies, a consulting firm focused on strategic comms, executive advisory, and coalition building. She previously led the Value of Water Campaign at the US Water Alliance and served as Chief of Staff for the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans. A former attorney, Christy holds a JD from Tulane and a BS in journalism from the University of Florida.

Ghassan Korban is Veolia's Vice President of Large Projects and Structuring in its Municipal Water Contract Operations business. Korban retired as executive director of the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans earlier this year where he led a 1,300-employee utility operation and spearheaded the organization's modernization efforts. Korban holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and an MBA from Marquette University.



Ghassan Korban

Intermission

Meet the Cast

ACT II



Katrina Lumague

ACT II: Scene 3

Katrina Lumague is External Affairs & Sustainability Coordinator at Walnut Valley Water District, where she develops events, campaigns, and content to keep communities informed and connected to their water. She contributed to her district's 2025 US Water Prize for transparent communications and is passionate about creating outreach that feels natural, relatable, and engaging.

Stephanie Fu is Senior External Affairs & Sustainability Coordinator at Walnut Valley Water District, where she blends strategy, storytelling, and humor to make water issues engaging and accessible. A co-creator of award-winning outreach initiatives, she helped the district earn the 2025 U.S. Water Prize for building public trust through transparent, community-centered communication.



Stephanie Fu

ACT II: Scene 3



Ameerah Palacios

ACT II: Scene 4

Ameerah Palacios (APR, CTA, MBA) helps leaders in government infrastructure solve complex challenges through strategic communications, research, change management & advocacy. She works on the integration of outreach and public engagement campaigns for potable water, stormwater, wastewater, water resources, and water reuse.



Meet the Cast

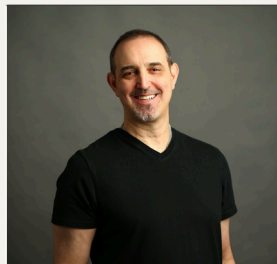
ACT III



Mayor Cavalier Johnson

ACT III: Scene 1

Bernie Armada, Ph.D., is a Professor of Communication Studies at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. A native of Brooklyn and graduate of the High School of Performing Arts, he has taught courses in storytelling, improvisation, and communication ethics while also helping professionals in industries from healthcare to software strengthen their communication practices.



Bernie Armada

ACT III: Scene 2



Ann Johnson Stewart

ACT III: Scene 3

Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart is a lawmaker (Minnesota Senate District 45), civil engineer, professor at the University of Minnesota, and small business owner. She's dedicated to building an economy that supports working families, protecting everyday rights, and ensuring communities remain a place where families can live safely and thrive. Ann is a proud wife, mother, stepmom, and grandma.

Catalyst Lingo

(Because Words Matter)

PRODUCTION

Part performance, part reality. A carefully crafted sequence of scenes where everyone plays a role. Sometimes rewritten in the moment for greater impact.

PLAYBILL

Your guide to “The Show.” More than a program, it’s a script of the story you’ve stepped into, and introduces scenes, cues, call times, and narrators.

NARRATOR

The voice that offers context and clarity. Sometimes guiding, sometimes questioning, always shaping what is understood.

SCENE

A moment in time where action unfolds and meaning emerges. Each Catalyst session is its own scene, but together they create the story of this Production.

CAST

Whether back-up performer, lead, stagehand, actor, script writer, or supporting artist, you each have a role in this story. The Catalyst Production is shaped by its cast. Your role matters, it influences, and it evolves.

REHEARSAL

A chance to practice, experiment, & fail safely. Mastery is born from trying, adjusting & trying again.

CURTAIN CALL

A reflection point. The moment to take in what just happened, and consider what comes next.

THE CATALYST OATH

A personal commitment to carry forward what was sparked here. To remember who you were here. And to return home ready to direct a new story of trust, values, and collaboration.

DIRECTOR

The one who chooses the frame.

THAT’S SO CATALYST

Used when something is different in the best way, out-of-the-box, whimsical, or wildly original. That which challenges the status quo, is a catalyst to a new way of thinking, & perhaps even deserves a standing ovation.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Unspoken tension of what we think but rarely confront because we aren’t equipped to question & converse productively. At Catalyst, the elephant doesn’t hide — it takes center stage.

COMPLEX HUMAN DYNAMICS

Messy mix of emotions, power, history & perspective that shapes decisions. Often ignored in professional problem-solving, but here we recognize them as the forces that make all the difference.



Notes

Notes

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Presented By Rogue Water Lab
Executive Producer Chelsea Boozer

Director Greg Wukasz
Stage Manager Terry Frazier
Local Partner Betsy Vornholt
Graphic Design Jacob Komarny
Media Partner waterloop

Special Thanks

Catalyst 2025 Planning Committee

Nate Conroy - STEMhero
Stephanie Dillon - Dillon Communications
Andrea Hay - Green Bay Water
Christy Harowski - HCB Strategies
Jacob Komarny - Usalco
Lily Lopez - Walnut Valley Water
Megan McDowell - AWWA
Mora McLaughlin - Pittsburgh Water
Chris O'Brien - Freshwater
Carlos Salazar - WSSC Water
Arianne Shipley - U.S. Pipe
Michelle Stockness - Freshwater
Betsy Vornholt - Milwaukee Water

Studio Partners

U.S. Pipe	Badger Meter
EMA, Inc.	Olsson
Rowland Water District	Stantec
Walnut Valley Water District	EPIC
Operational Technical Solutions	Xylem
120 Water	McWane Ductile
American Cast Iron Pipe	Swift Comply
Milwaukee Water Works	



**ROGUE
WATER
LAB**

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