



American Water Works Association
Pacific Northwest Section



PNWS-AWWA
Annual Section Conference
April 2022

Balancing the Water Equity Equation

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Agenda

1. Introduction / Background
2. Case Studies
3. Questions / Sharing

Introduction

Guiding Questions

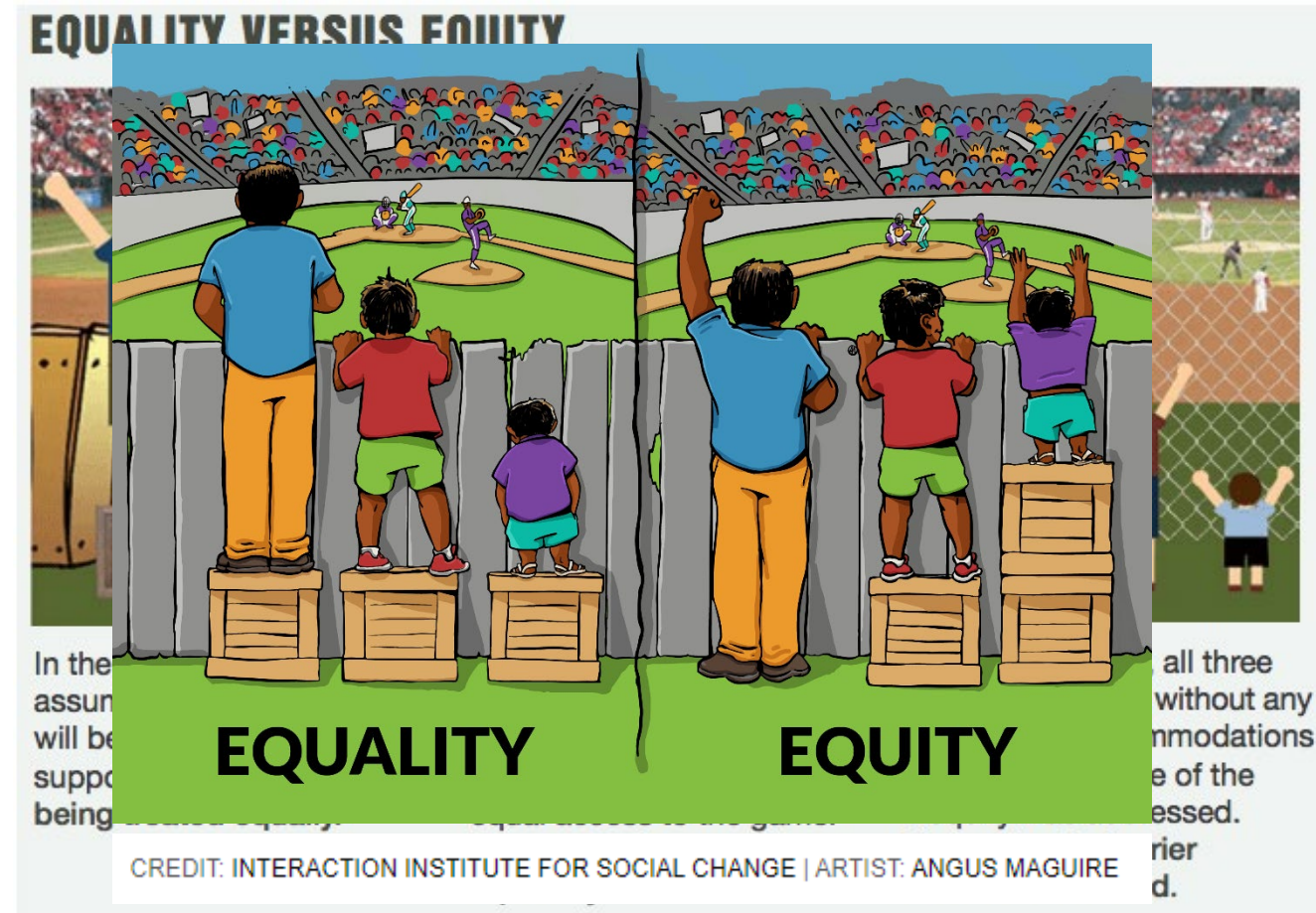
- **What are some reasons you decided to come to this session?**
- **What does water equity mean to you?**

Water Equity

...water equity occurs when all communities:

- Have access to safe, clean, affordable drinking water and wastewater services;
- Share in the economic, social, and environmental benefits of water systems; and
- Are resilient in the face of floods, drought, and other climate risks.

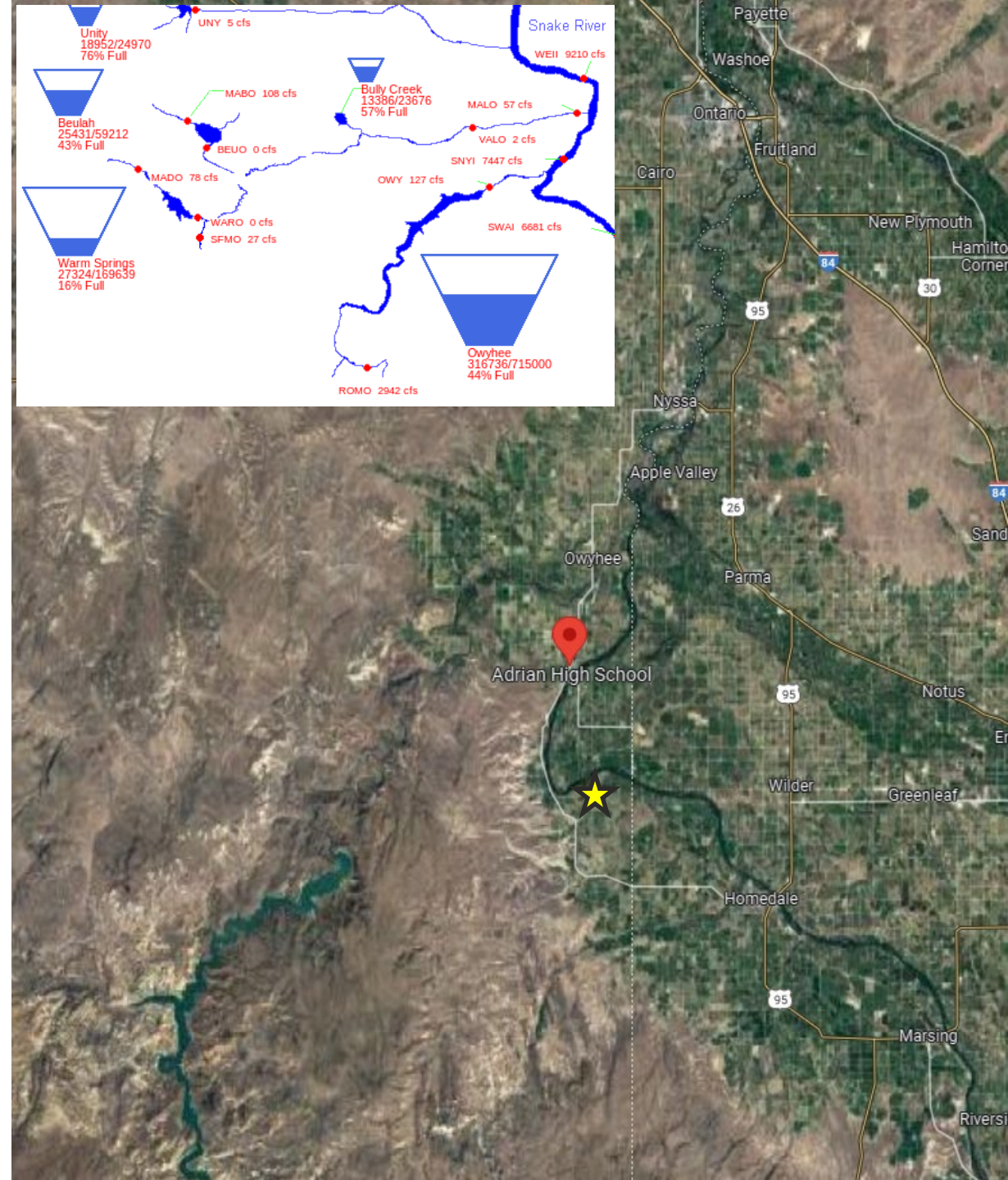
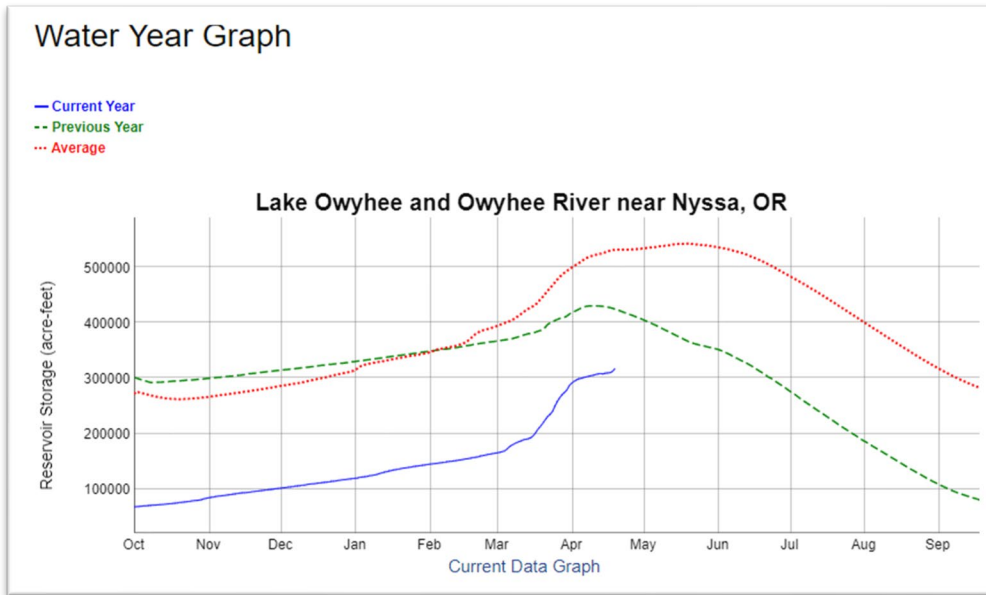
-US Water Alliance, 2021



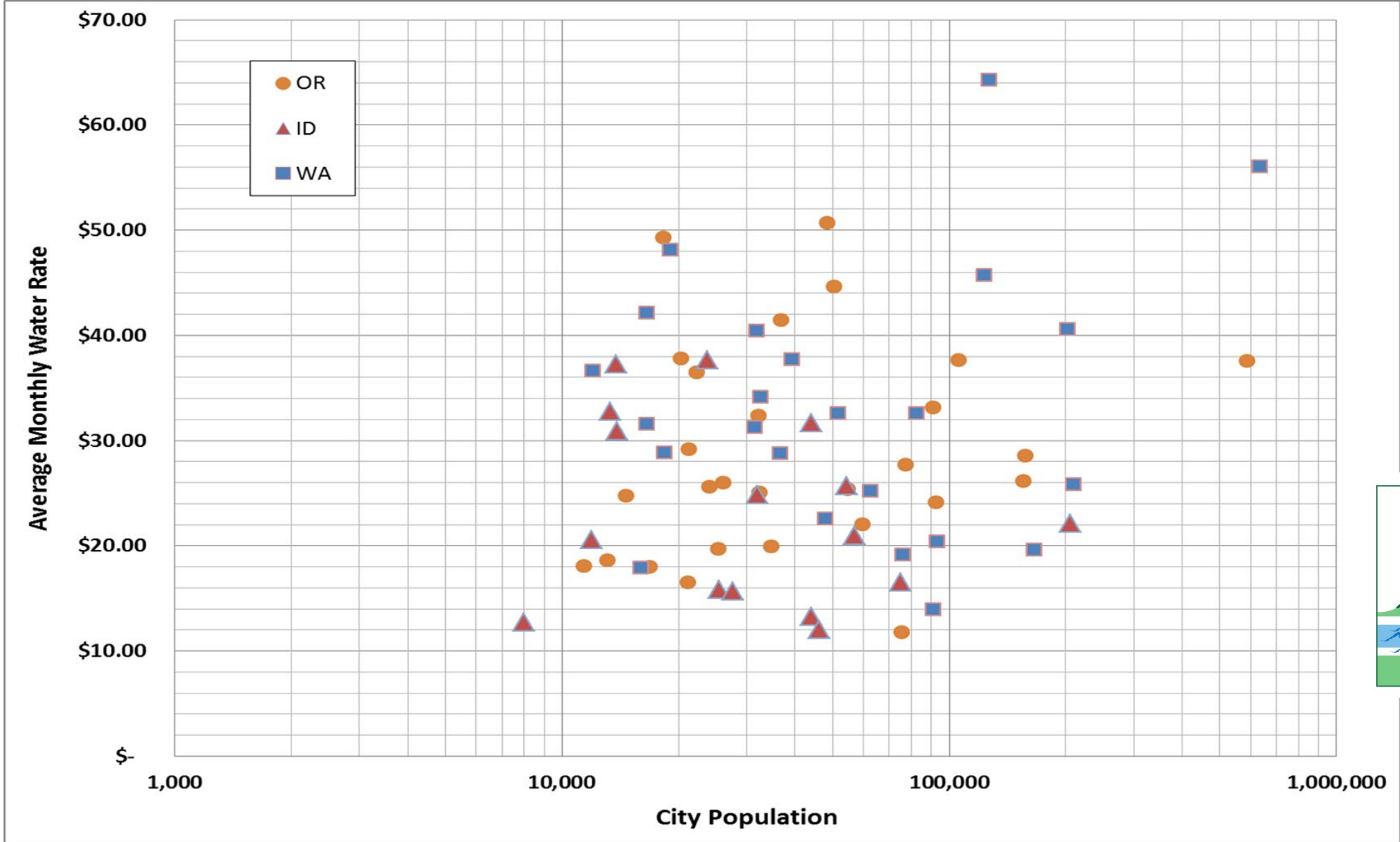
A picture illustrating the concepts of equality, equity and justice. Courtesy of *Courtesy Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities*, by City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), Ottawa

My Water Equity Story

- **Water drives economy**
- **Resilient and affordable supplies allows higher chance of success**
- **Climate change impacts being felt**



Water Rate View – 2014



US Water Alliance

- Non-profit focusing on how to support a One Water approach and vision
- Utilities/Agencies, Manufacturers, Non-profits, Consultants/Private Sector
- Promote Change Leadership
 - Rising professionals (2020)
- Information sharing is key

[Publications | US Water Alliance](http://uswateralliance.org/resources/publications)

<http://uswateralliance.org/resources/publications>



Access

- Affordability
- Race
- Historical investment
- Geographical
- Climate change

**More than
2,000,000
Americans live
without basic
access to safe
drinking water
and sanitation.**



US Water Alliance. Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States. 2019

Case Studies

Typical approaches -

- Design & Construction
 - M/D/W/E/S/B goals
 - Encourages greater diversity and inclusion of groups who may not typically be able to perform large, complex projects
 - Challenges when there is a lot of work available and pool gets stretched, and for specialty work
 - Can create a natural tension between traditional companies
 - Certification requirements can create barriers or burden



Organizational -

- Seattle Public Utilities
 - Service equity action plan (2014)
 - Branch equity teams
 - Capital Improvement Planning (CIP):
 - *“Factors in service equity are incorporated into the prioritization of potential projects in any program based on amalgamated data from the Office of Sustainability and Environment, including race, education, language and median income.*
- Known disparities of historical service levels are also considered within racial equity planning tools such as stakeholder analyses and inclusive outreach planning.”*

Organizational -

- Camden, NJ
 - Challenges –
 - Aging infrastructure
 - Water Quality
 - Industrial pollution
 - Vulnerable groundwater
 - Combined sewer overflows
 - Lead service lines
 - Unaccounted Water
 - Affordability
 - Climate change
 - Hazard locations
 - Public trust and education
 - Action Plan –
 - Build and nurture partnerships
 - Multi-benefit green infrastructure w/ multiple stakeholders
 - Investing in infrastructure to reduce CSOs
 - Lead awareness campaign, assisting component replacement, promoting disclosure policies (NY)
 - Discounted rates for impacted area(s) and advocate for income-based rates or allow for subsidies
 - Map climate impacts on vulnerable communities / areas
 - Inclusive water workforce
 - Employer-driven employment pipeline

http://www.uswateralliance.org/sites/uswateralliance.org/files/publications/Water%20Equity%20Roadmap_Camden_Final%20pdf.pdf

Engineering / Design -

- Capital improvements or large projects often do not promote equity
- Resiliency at what cost?
 - Right-sizing improvements and equipment
 - Factors commensurate with application or system integration
 - Balancing automation / remote operations
 - Overall climate impact, long-term environmental lifecycle of components



Engineering / Design -

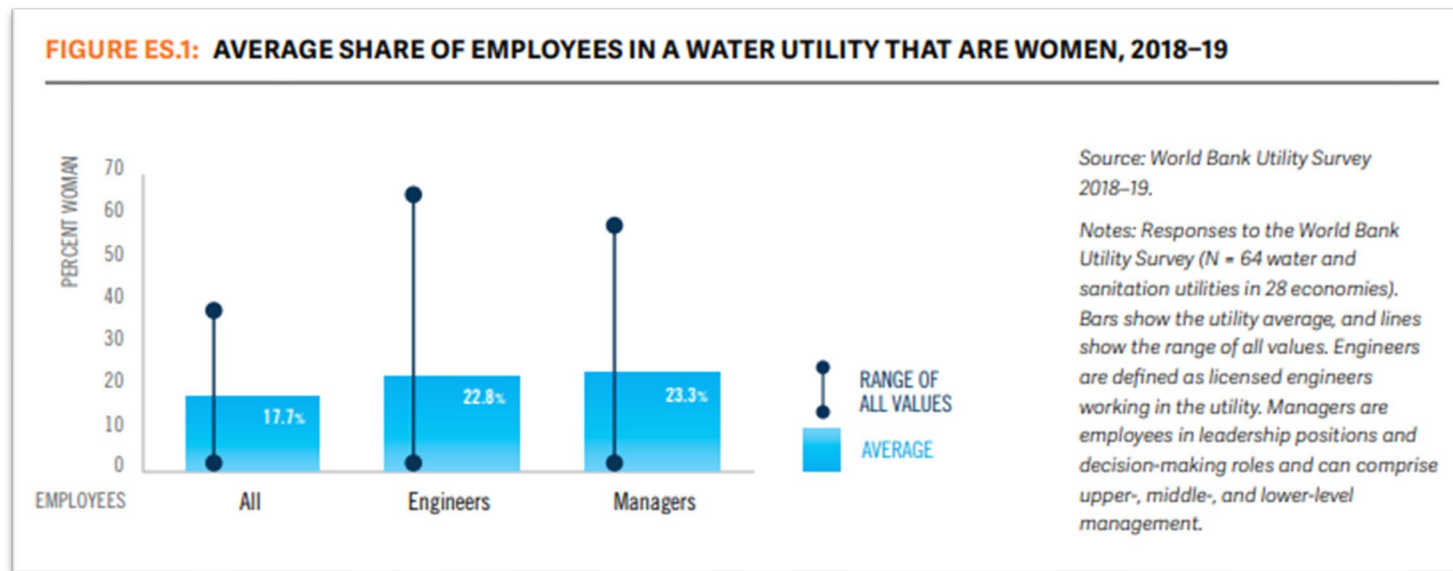
WTP Locker rooms

- Utility A
 - Minimal staffing diversity
 - Existing separate gender facilities oversized / not fully utilized
 - Streamlined solution with centralized storage and separate changing areas / shower room(s)



Engineering / Design -

- Utility B
 - Larger diversity pool
 - Discussed traditional options based on historical demographics
 - Re-engaged larger audience of impacted groups
- Developed significantly different solution than was originally presented



Thank you!

Questions?

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